I, THE KING

by

W. W. WILLIAMS

College Life, a South Pacific Romance, Business

I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS

A story of a rich, young man, Christopher Newell, aged twenty-one, an orphan, a Yale man, is left an income of $80,000 a year.

The War breaks out and he enlists in the Navy, and is sent to a South Pacific Station. He is ordered to take a boat with one other sailor to take soundings. A fog envelops the boat and they drift for days, until finally they sight an island. On landing they find it to be inhabited. Newell sets up a form of government, he as king. His companion rebels and tries to upset the government and is shot by order of the King (Newell).

Finally he is rescued from the island and returns to his Connecticut home.

He finally finds his field of usefulness in straightening out the business tangles of his uncle's factory.

Many things happen in the meantime. He resumes matrimonial relations when back in his native land, and the wife joins him in a program of sacrifice.

A story full of adventure and strange experiences.

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FAMILY

A. L. BURT COMPANY
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By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS

The Story of
A Rich Young Man

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PART I

KIT

I, THE KING

CHAPTER I

I

THE nursery door opened with a soft swishing sound. Kit felt something warm on his face and opened one eye to see the alert head and pink tongue of a collie reaching through the brass bars of the crib. The tongue made another lunge, landing in his open eye.

"Go way," Kit moaned. "Naughty. Go way!"

Nana, who was fussing over the washstand, turned on the scene. "Now you stop that, Pollux! You get out, now! Out! You know you don't come in till after your master's bath. . . . Now then, Master Christopher, time to get up."

She raised a window shade and a great splotch of yellow light fell on the carpet. Brilliant motes swirled in the beam above it. Kit watched them, lasciviously comfortable and procrastinative.

"Where does the sun come from, Nana?"

"From the sun. Come along, now."

"The sun comes from the sun, the sun comes from the sun," chanted Kit in a languorous manner, faintly satirical. Nana grew more impatient, verbosely.

"But you haven't got my bath ready yet, Nana." He pronounced it "bahth," as she did.

"I shall have, by the time you're ready. You've got to have your teeth brushed first, and so forth."

"You can brush my teeth afterwards. What's so forth?"

At that point the door opened again and an ethereal figure in loose blue silk stood over Kit. "Who's my lazy boy? Lazy, lazy boy! You're coming down to breakfast with Papa and me. Mr. Newell feels better this morning, Nana, and he wants Master Kit to come down. Can you have him ready in half an hour? I'll get him ready, while you get the bath ready."

Nana fussed among water pots at a higher tempo. Mrs. Newell let down the brass rail of the crib, placed her hands in Kit's armpits and pulled him to his feet. She undid the buttons of his flannel night dress, which fell off him. Kit flopped forward on his mother's breast. Her soft hand passed up and down his back and legs.

"I don't want to get up, Mummy."

"What? Don't you want to have breakfast with Papa and me?"

"No."

"You don't? Why not?"

Kit was tired of that. "Pollux woke me up, Mummy. He licked my eye."

"Naughty Pollux! There, your bath's ready. Come along!"

Half an hour later Kit sat strapped in a high chair by the dining room table and disgraced himself. He was given a boiled egg mashed up in a glass, which he promptly upset. When that damage was repaired he amused himself by kicking spoons off the table. Nevins picked them up, silently, and replaced them beyond his reach. His mother and father were both

hidden behind newspapers. If they would have him down, they might at least amuse him! He reached a predatory toe far across the table at a distant knife. Mr. Newell jerked his paper down.

"Hi, stop that! Put that foot down!"

Kit put it down. "Darling," said Mama, "if you can't behave at table you'll have to eat in the nursery."

"*Want* to eat in the nursery!"

"That," said Mr. Newell, invisible again, "is where he has you."

Mrs. Newell, disturbed, was standing over Kit, arranging his bib and the things on his tray, and talking. He could feel her breath on his hair. "Darling, you must be a little gentleman. You *must* learn to behave at table—we must have you down oftener. You can't eat in the nursery all your life. Here you are four years old and—"

In an access of irritation Kit raised his egg spoon and slapped his mother smartly on the face. She drew back, hurt and astounded. Crisis was in the air; Kit felt it, and cringed. But suddenly he saw his mother's face with a great smear of yellow egg on it, and laughed.

"Oh, Mummy, you look so funny! You've got a yellow face! Oh, Mummy . . ."

Mr. Newell was over him now, removing the tray and taking him down from the chair. "This has gone about far enough. Come here. You've behaved abominably. You upset your egg, you put your foot on the table and you threw egg at your mother—"

"I didn't! I slapped her with the spoon!"

"Yes, he did, George. It hurt, quite badly."

"You slapped your mother with the spoon. I won't have such things. You've got to be punished."

He took a knife off the table. Kit thought he was

going to be killed. But it was only a dull fruit knife; with it Mr. Newell struck Kit on the open palm, several times. His eyes closed, his mouth opened.

He was back in his chair, still bellowing. He could not think of food. Life was all hate, misunderstanding and an aching hand. "Be quiet!" ordered his father, but he yelled on, fearless in despair. Silently his mother took him out of his chair again and led him toward the door. "I'm sorry you can't learn to be a good little boy. Nevins, call Nana, will you?"

"That's the way it always is," grunted Mr. Newell, returning to his paper.

II

The Broom was ordered for half past two, and Kit was quite satisfied with the arrangement. A Broom was a stick thing you swept with and made dust; it was also a thing you drove in, a little house with doors and windows and green cushioned seats and a nice smell. You got into it, and after a while you were in the Park, and when you got to a place called the Mall you got out and played. Nana sat on a bench with the other nurses, and you played with the other children. After a while you got into the Broom again and drove Home.

On this day the preliminaries all went beautifully. The Broom smelt beautifully, Mama went, sitting furred and beautiful beside Nana, and Pollux was allowed to come. He foamed about the Broom, making a delicious turmoil. They passed quite close to General Sherman and the Angel. Kit loved that gold Angel. Just inside the Park gates he saw a horse slip and fall down.

The Mall was sunny and lovely and full of children,

Maudie Hoffington was there, and Dickie, and the Mercer twins, Davy and Joan. Maudie was in a coat of white fur with little black tails.

"H'llo!" she said carelessly. Then she saw Pollux and fell on his neck with a shriek of delight. Kit was jealous, not because Maudie cared more for Pollux than for himself, but because Pollux was his dog and it would not do for her to win too much of his affection. He also threw himself on Pollux's neck, gushing endearing terms. Pollux squirmed, and licked both their faces impartially.

"I've got a watch," said Maudie, suddenly sated. "I'll show it to you, but not now. We're going to play hopscotch now. Come along!"

"I don't want to play hopscotch. That's a girls' game. I want to play Come Away."

"All right. Who's It?"

"Let me see your watch, Maudie."

"No, not now. I've got to exacise, Nursie says, so's to get warm."

"Will you let me see it when you've exacised?"

"Yes. Come on!"

When they were tired of Come Away, Kit returned to Maudie. With bated breath she drew from her muff a little gold watch a-dangle on a short chain. "It winds," she said triumphantly, "and ticks!"

"Let me have it!"

"No, you'll break it. I'll show you."

She carefully turned the corrugated button and held the watch to the ear of the fascinated Kit. An angelic ticking sound issued forth, then stopped.

"Do it again, Maudie!" She did it. "Do it again!"

After the third time Kit was afire with envy. "Let me have it, Maudie, just a little while! I won't hurt it!"

"No, you can't. You'll break it. Boys always break things."

"No, I won't! Really!"

"Yes, you will!"

"No, I won't!"

"You can't have it, anyway."

"I'll take it!"

Maudie knew he would, and backed off, pushing the watch into her muff. Kit followed her; a short scuffle ensued, at the end of which Kit ran off, bearing the watch aloft. Maudie lay on the pavement, kicking her heels in the air and screaming. "He stole my watch! Nursie, he stole my watch!"

Nana and Nursie heard, and broke off a discussion on Southampton versus Narragansett. Nursie picked up and soothed the outraged Maudie, but Nana's task was harder. Kit was running about on the grass, elusive and agile, with the watch in his hands.

"Master Christopher," she called in her clear English voice, "come here! Come here at once! Give Maudie her watch this instant!" This having no effect, she adopted other tactics. "For shame, to knock a little girl down and steal her watch! A great big boy like you! Shame!" Kit ran about as before, and she continued, playing her trump card: "What will your Mummy say, when I tell her about this?"

Kit's face fell, but he remained obdurate. Then he saw Dickie Hoffington come running toward him, and knew that the situation was changed. "Here, take it," he said, handing Dickie the watch. "It's no good, anyway."

Dickie flung the watch down and unexpectedly punched Kit in the face. Kit punched back; they grappled and fell, rolling over and over on the hard turf. They had to be separated by the nurses.

"Now p'r'aps next time you won't knock my sista down," finished Dickie in beautifully bland cheerful tones.

Perhaps he wouldn't, Kit reflected as he walked back to the Broom. Nana could be flouted in safety, but boys were another matter.

III

In summer the Newells went to a place called Narragansett Pier. Here they lived in a long gray shingled house overlooking the water. The nursery was on the side of the house, and from the windows on that side you could see part of the water. Another window, at the back, was directly over the kitchen door. There was a little porch there, with Virginia creeper climbing over it, where the servants sat and talked in the evening. Kit lay in bed at night and listened to them.

As he lay there in the morning he could hear the milkman talking with Annie, the cook. He would open his eyes and see in front of him the fireplace with the picture called "Speak!" over it and on his right the two windows you could see the water from. The blinds were closed now, but the sun filtered through them in stripes, each one shading from bright yellow to dull green. Then pretty soon there would be a sound of crunching wheels from the other window, and the milkman's voice, rich and masculine, saying: "Well, and how's my best girl this morning?" or something like that. Kit had never seen the milkman, but he liked his voice. And after some exchanges with Annie's lighter voice the wheels would crunch away and leave him again to the silence and dim light. The Virginia creeper would rustle against the porch;

a fly would buzz angrily and then stop; a bird would fly by outside with a sudden twitter.

And it was not the sea or the beach or the bathing that the word Narragansett brought to Kit's mind in later years, but the languor and delicate light of those early mornings.

After breakfast he would play on the beach, mostly in his bathing suit. Then would come the Bathe, and after that, Dinner. Then the Rest. Then a walk and a play in some woods that lay behind the house, or possibly he would go with his mother for a Drive. Sometimes she would pay Calls, and Kit would sit by William asking questions and watching the horses swish the flies from their flanks. Then Supper, with the sun streaming flat into the back window of the nursery and illuminating "Speak!" with a rich golden glow. Then Bed, with his mother coming in to kiss him. Sometimes he was already asleep.

Papa had a Boat. She was moored directly opposite the house, some two hundred yards out. Often in the afternoon Papa and Mama and other people, lovely-smelling ladies in veils and immaculate gentleman in white flannel trousers, would get into rowboats and go out to her and sail all the afternoon, coming back about the time Kit had his supper. Occasionally they would not return till he was in bed and asleep.

Once he was allowed to go sailing too. He was rowed out to the Boat with Mama and Papa and another lady and gentleman. The Boat was quite large; you could have a good run on the thing they called the Deck. When the boat started the great white sails were spread out and the floor and everything rocked in the blue waves and it became hard to run straight. Over the edge the water flowed by, fast and white, with a hissing sound. Kit loved it.

His mother sat with the other lady on the Deck by the steps leading down into the Cabin. His mother was nervous, and kept calling to him not to do this or that. There was no railing to the Boat, only a little ridge of wood (called Scupper), and Mama was afraid, she said, that Kit would fall over.

"I ought never to have let you bring him, George," he heard her say. "I knew it would be like this."

The Boat rolled and rocked, and Kit had great fun. Once as he was running along he lost his balance in a sudden dip and fell backwards. He simply sat down and slid till his feet touched the Scupper; he knew he wasn't going to fall over. He heard his mother scream. The other gentleman, who was nearest him at the time, took him by the hand and led him to the two ladies. He sat down on his mother's knees, which felt weak and wobbly under him.

"Oh," she said, "I feel positively sick. You needn't laugh, George."

But both the gentlemen and even the other lady were smiling. "Here, Marjorie, I'll take him," she said, and Kit was transferred to her lap. "A boat without a rail on a windy day isn't much fun for a lively young man, is it? Shall I tell you a story, Kit?"

His mother got up, unsteadily, and went down the stairway. "Well, George," she said as she went, "I hope you're satisfied."

"Bully excuse," murmured Kit's father.

After that Kit did not go sailing for some years. But the time came when he would go out with his father in all kinds of weather, and he learned from his father and the Skipper how to steer and Come About and handle the Main Sheets—ropes really, but you called them sheets. He was never in the least sick,

and conceived a love of sailing and the sea which had an important effect in 1917.

IV

Mrs. Newell sat in front of her dressing table while Marcelline did her hair. Marcelline was not young; she was plain and stoutish, but she had a slim shapely waist. Kit leaned on the dressing table and played with the silver things on it. There was a circular silver brush with long white bristles which it amused him to comb with the button hook. The bristles flowed smoothly through the hook, concentrating themselves to its shape and then spreading out again.

His mother inspected one finger. "J'ai cassé cet ongle," she said. Marcelline was sympathetic. "Ts, ts, quel dommage! Est-ce que ça fait mal, Madame?"

"Non. Mais c'est laid, vous savez. C'est embêtant."

"Oui, mais Madame aura ses gants. Ça ne se verra pas!"

"Oui. Mais pas à dîner."

"Et maintenant pour la coiffure!" said Marcelline. "Est-ce que Madame se fera coiffer à gauche ce soir, ou à droite?"

"À gauche, je crois.—Non, attendez. Je ne sais pas si the Hoffingtons' loge se trouve à droite ou à gauche. Vraiment, j'ai oublié."

"Mais . . . Que faire, alors?"

"Je ne sais pas. C'est embêtant."

They talked on at some length. Kit understood in a general way; he had never been taught a word of French, but Marcelline was a great friend of his and he had absorbed a certain amount from her.

"Si Madame mettait sa grande tiare?" suggested

Marcelline at last. "Avec une tiare on est bien n'importe où!"

"Oui, mais . . . I didn't want to really dress up to-night. I couldn't wear the blue in that case. I'd have to wear the white satin."

"Eh bien, pourquoi pas le satin blanc? C'est l'opéra!"

"Oh . . . Très bien, je le mettrai. Je ne voulais pas, puisque Monsieur ne va pas avec moi, et je ne vais nulle part après l'opéra, mais enfin . . ."

"Mummy," said Kit, "Joan Mercer's Mama's cook's got a cat with three kittens!"

"Really, darling? What color are they? Marcelline, donnez-moi cette épingle-là."

"Gray and white. Why isn't Papa going to-night, Mummy?"

"He doesn't feel well enough."

"Is Papa sick?"

Mrs. Newell did not answer for a moment. "He doesn't feel very well. Will you go down and kiss him before you go to bed, and be nice to him?"

"Yes. Mummy, I want a cat with kittens!"

"We'll see about it. Attendez, Marcelline, je vous donnerai la clef."

Marcelline went across the room, opened a small door in the wall and presently came back with a black leather box. This when open revealed a high circlet, a veritable crown of diamonds. Kit had never seen anything so magnificent. He held his breath while Marcelline lifted the glittering thing and placed it on his mother's soft brown hair. "Ma-*ma!*" he gasped. "You're so *bew*-tiful!" Marcelline and his mother laughed.

His mother stood on a sheet which Marcelline placed on the floor. She slipped off her peignoir;

Marcelline brought up a mass of shiny white stuff which presently, as she adjusted it to Mama's form, became recognizable as a gown. It was narrow at the waist, so narrow that it seemed impossible there could be any Mama there. Above, it flared into a brief bodice which left Mama's white arms and neck entirely bare. Below the waist it flared much more widely into the skirt; this at the back was expanded into a train. His mother as she stood there, fully dressed, pulling on her long white gloves, looked inexpressibly regal and beautiful.

"Mama," said Kit, "you're the beautifullest lady I ever saw!"

Marcelline, her job done, seized him by the shoulders and mauled him about, tickling and fondling him, and talking the while in her incredibly rapid French. "Ah, il sait bien, le jeune monsieur! Voilà le bon gout! Il y en aura bien d'autres qui diront la même chose ce soir!"

"J'espère qu'ils ne le *diront* pas," said Mrs. Newell, laughing.

Marcelline threw up her hands from the elbows, seemingly annoyed, for some inexplicable reason. "Oh, ces Américaines!" she said, blustering.

She put a fur cloak on Mama, who then stooped and kissed Kit. "Good-night, my angel. Remember to go and see Papa. He's in the dining room."

The house seemed strangely quiet and empty after she was gone. Kit went into the dining room and found Papa sitting alone at the table eating and reading a newspaper. Kit sat down on a chair at the side. His father looked up.

"Hello! How is it you're not in bed?"

"I don't go till eight o'clock."

"That so? Quite a seasoned roué you're getting to be. Well, what you been doing?"

Kit told him. His father listened vaguely; soon he returned to his paper, which was propped up against a claret bottle before him. Presently Kit ceased talking, and thought. The silence of the room, the drab clothes of Papa, the noiseless comings and goings of Nevins, it was all so different from the bustle and beauty of Mama in her bedroom. Men were so different, so uninteresting, so unresponsive. His father had said nothing at all about the kittens.

He slipped off his chair and went to his father. "What? Oh, going to bed. Well, good night, Sonny. Sleep tight." He kissed Kit briefly and returned to his paper.

"I *like* Papa," Kit told Nana expansively as he got into bed, "but I *love* Mama!"

V

Kit had a Birthday; he was going to be Seven. There was a Party, and the Hoffingtons and the Mercers and a lot of other children came.

Strings of different colors had been wound all over two floors of the house. You started in the big drawing room; each child was given a string and told to follow it. There was a Present hidden at the other end, and he who first reached it (no breaking the thread, mind!) would get not only the Present, but a Prize. Then they played games for a while, and then they went into the dining room and sat down at little tables and ate ice cream and cake and candy and pulled crackers. After that they returned to the drawing room; some one played the piano and those

who knew how to, danced. The others just ran around.

Kit was one of the latter. He enjoyed it hugely, but presently he knew he was not enjoying it so much. He was beginning to feel queer. For a moment he felt very queer indeed. When that passed he ran about as before, but not because he wanted to. It was the thing to do. He wanted to lie down, but you couldn't lie down at a Party, with all these children having a good time.

No one noticed. Why couldn't some one see he was feeling queer, and take him upstairs? He couldn't tell any one. He strayed by his mother, pawing her with his hands, but she only said, "Having a good time, honey?" and smiled. He sat down and pretended to play a game he had been given.

At last the children began to go. He could hold out now, he thought. They laughed and chattered in the hall, shaking hands with him and Mama and saying they'd had a very nice time. When the last one was out of the door, he rushed up to the nursery.

"Oh, I feel sick!" he cried. "Nana, I feel so sick . . ."

Oh, the joy of it, being able to be sick without shame, whole-heartedly! After all was o'er he lay on the bed, gasping, but happy. "Oh, Nana," he moaned, "it's almost as nice as eating!"

His mother came in and was informed of the misfortune. "He was feeling very queer for some time, ma'am, he said, but he wouldn't come upstairs and be sick because of the Party. He was such a little gentleman he couldn't bear to leave his little guests till the very end."

His mother sat down on the bed, beaming on him. "Was that it, darling? Mother's brave boy! He

wouldn't leave his Party! He was a sweet boy, that's what he was!"

Soft as down were her fingers on his throbbing head. His happiness became mixed; this praise was sweet, but it wasn't quite deserved. He hadn't been brave about anything; he had simply not wanted to show signs of sickness before all those children. It would have been a humiliation. Still, it didn't matter much. He let it pass, and accepted the homage.

VI

Nana was going away, Home, to England. Her mother had died and her father was all alone, and she had to go and take care of him.

"It's just as well," Kit heard his father say. He supposed he meant it was just as well for Nana's father to have Nana as her mother.

There was talk of a German governess. Nana began it. Whenever Kit crossed her she would say: "Well, I dare say you'll like your German governess a great deal better! Hmf!" and wipe her eyes.

One afternoon Mrs. Newell took Kit out in the Broom alone, and told him they were going to Aunt Emmy's to meet the new governess.

Aunt Emmy was Mrs. Newell's only sister, and she lived in an old brick house on West Eighth Street. She was a little older than her sister, and much stouter, and not beautiful at all. She sat smiling behind her tea table as they came in and waved her left hand at an angular being in black, with large red hands and a large red face. "This is Fräulein Rock," she said. "Fräulein, this is my sister Mrs. Newell, and the young man."

Kit shook hands with the black and red lady, who

put her other hand on his shoulder. It felt heavy and unfamiliar there, quite mannish. "Would you like me to come and live with you?" she said in a guttural, halting voice.

"I don't think so," said Kit promptly.

Aunt Emmy laughed and the German lady grew even redder. "That isn't polite, Kit," said Mrs. Newell, not laughing. "Manners is one of the things you'll have to teach him, I'm afraid, Fräulein."

"I shall try my best," said Fräulein. Her voice sounded grim.

Kit could not see where manners came into it. The woman had asked a ridiculous question, to be answered only as he answered it. Assuredly he did not want this black and red creature in the place of the gentle Nana.

But she came and was installed in the nursery the very afternoon of the day when Nana left weeping for England. Her hands were rough as well as red, and he hated the feeling of them when she bathed him. Also she immediately began to talk in her incomprehensible language, apparently expecting him to understand her. Also she took an unworthy and trivial attitude toward some of his most sacred arrangements.

"She wouldn't let Pollux in," he told his parents next morning at breakfast, "even after I'd had my bath. And she made me say my prayers kneeling down, and she didn't put out my blue blanket. And when I spilled water out of my bath she slapped me."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Newell out of his eternal newspaper, "but what Emmy had picked up something rather good, for once. It would be extraordinary if we were to find one jewel in that collection."

That afternoon Kit went to the Park with Fräulein

and Pollux. He introduced her to the Hoffingtons' Nursie, as his mother had told him to, but their conversation was not spontaneous. They sat stiffly on a bench, Fräulein following Kit with a hawk's eye, and replying in monosyllables to Nursie's offerings. Apparently Fräulein wasn't going to be popular in the Mall. Well, he didn't wonder.

In the course of the afternoon Kit got gay with the Mercers' nurse and undid her bonnet strings. She was a great friend of his, and gentle as Nana. She did not object strenuously, though he knew she did not like it. After the first time Fräulein told him not to do it. Of course he paid no attention; when the fit seized him he came running back and pulled the white strings again. Fräulein in an instant was on her feet, stamping, glowering, roaring. Kit danced away on the grass, as was his custom. "Yah!" he cried. "Catch me!"

Now Fräulein really used her voice. The Mall rang; children stopped playing, nurses looked up from their work in amazement. "Komm!" she roared. "Komm gleich! Wenn ich sage Komm, dann kommst du! Haste verstehen? . . . Nicht? Dann werd ich dir 'mal lernen, du ungezogenes Dingk!"

Without the slightest haste, still bellowing, she strode out toward Kit. He watched her, paralyzed. It was not in him to run away; his legs simply would not take him. "Komm hier!" said the dragon, stopping. Kit came. She seized him with one hand and held him firmly; with the other she belabored his ears, boxing them soundly, right and left, till his head swam and his eyes were blind with tears. "So, so, so, mein Bube! Ich werde dir noch zeigen, dir! Willst du? Willst du? Du, du . . . Jetzt gehst du dich entschuldigen. Komm! Tell the nurrrse you are sorry!"

She took him before the Mercers' Mary and held him there, by the ear. "I'm sorry, Mary," said Kit, his head down, his tears falling and splashing on the pavement. Then the dragon let him go and he staggered away, wiping his face on his sleeve.

After that the Mall warmed up to Fräulein perceptibly. Nurses and governesses came up to pass the time of day or ask her advice on when to "turn." Children eyed her with awe; to win a smile from her was to win distinction.

Kit's attitude toward her was less one of hate than might be supposed; it was more that of a scientist who has discovered a totally new, dangerous and immensely powerful element. She was something new in people. The contrast between her handling of this affair and Nana's conduct of the similar one a few years back did not escape him for a moment. Unreservedly, though he hated to do it, he must yield Fräulein the palm.

But his respect soon became mixed with a quite real liking. Fräulein was never unjust nor was she always unpleasant; in time of need she never failed and when in the mood for it she could be affectionate. But above all she was effective. It occurred to Kit that it might not be a bad idea to be the sort of person she was if, by any improbable chance, he ever grew up.

In a month he was talking and being read to in German. He gained a colloquial knowledge of the language which never entirely left him, and stood him in good stead on one occasion.

CHAPTER II

I

AT the age of five Kit had begun going to kindergarten at Miss Loeb's school, and continued in the "primary department" of the same institution. When he was nine he left there and went to Miss Carmichael's on East 63rd Street, which was a very different matter. There were only boys there, and they all called each other by their last names.

His days became things of heavy schedule and little leisure. His mornings were spent at school, and in the afternoon he either went back to Miss Carmichael's for play hour on the roof or had his dancing lesson or music lesson or what not. Only Wednesday and Sunday afternoons remained free.

When he first went to Miss Carmichael's he had no intimate friends there except Dickie Hoffington, the blond, the bland, the unruffled. Dickie was nearly a year older than Kit and already an Old Boy, so he did not see much of him. The boys in his own class were at first a flock of harpies who ran up and swiped your hat as you were going out of the building, and you ran after them and tried to swipe theirs. This ritual of amusement, inexpressibly tiresome after a while even to the participants, was punctiliously gone through every day. Kit soon hated it, but he joined in it as lustily as the others, not knowing how to do otherwise.

There was a red-haired little boy with freckles, by

name Jimmie Haynes, who was particularly aggressive toward Kit in this respect, so naturally Kit was particularly aggressive to him. At last one day Jimmie came up to him as they left the building saying: "Fins a minute! Fins! Look here, Newell. I won't swipe your dip any more if you won't swipe mine. How about it? Shall we?"

"For always?" asked Kit. "Or only to-day?"

"Always, if you like."

"All right."

"All right! We'll swipe other kids', but not each other's. Say, I've got a peachy mechanical train, with two tunnels. I'd like to have you see it."

From this alliance grew a friendship. Jimmie was at the Newells' at all odd hours, except when Kit was at Jimmie's. Fräulein and Mama grew rather tired of the affair, especially Fräulein, but Mr. Newell, as Kit soon became aware, deliberately encouraged it. He was that sad thing, often mentioned among nurses, "an only child."

So Jimmie and he played and fought and giggled together and spent Saturday nights at each other's houses without stint. Other friendships cropped up, but none ever equalled this in intensity or endurance. Dickie Hoffington, eyeing the affair from aloft, once spoke scathingly to Kit of his intimacy with "that fellow Haynes."

"What's the matter with him?" Kit inquired.

"Oh, he's sort of . . ."

"Sort of what?"

"Oh . . . Look here, Newell. My mother and father don't know his. Neither do yours."

"Well, what of it?"

"Gee, Newell, you're a kid. Why, when I said something about asking Haynes to our party last

month, my Dad said, 'What, has the Tammany Haynes got a brat in your outfit?' and my mother said—"

Kit simply walked away, leaving Dickie talking to vacant air. There was no resentment, no quarrel; Dickie remained bland as ever. But their early intimacy cooled into a tolerance that lasted their lifetime. Kit on his side always felt that he had chosen well between the two, though he lost sight of Haynes when they left Carmichael's and he was thrown with Dickie, on and off, for many years.

II

One day at recess a number of them were lounging about the schoolroom, talking. The conversation ran to Fathers.

"Mine's a lawyer," said Jimmie Haynes.

"Mine's a banker," said Dick Hoffington. "He runs the Third National."

"Mine's an engineer," contributed another, and at last some one inevitably asked: "What's yours, Newell?"

"Why . . ." Kit actually did not know. It was most embarrassing. "That would be telling," he parried.

"Ho!" said some one. "Don't you know?"

"Sure I do."

"Don't he do anything?"

"Sure he does."

"Well, what?"

"Is he a robber?" asked one of the smaller boys, with wide eyes. The episode ended in laughter, but that evening Kit asked his mother if his father did not have any profession.

"Why, not at present, dear; he isn't well enough." Her face, her beautiful smooth face that he loved so much, grew thin and grave.

"Is Papa sick?"

"He doesn't have to stay in bed, but he's not able to work. When you were very little he had typhoid fever and nearly died, and his heart was affected. And now—now there's something new."

"What?"

"Arthritis, I'm afraid."

"What's that?"

"Pains in the joints. I don't want to talk much about it. You must just be as sweet to him as you can."

"Well, didn't he ever do any work?"

"Yes, indeed; he was a lawyer, and a very fine one. He became a junior partner of Closson and Phillpotts when he was only twenty-eight." A soft note of pride came into her voice. "That was before I knew him, even. He'd have had a great career, poor Papa. Every one said there wasn't a more brilliant young corporation lawyer in New York."

So Papa had a secret trial; he was not the imperturbable Olympian he always seemed. Kit felt for him, but of course there was nothing to be said, nothing to be done about it. In school he let it be known that his father was a lawyer.

III

Among other things, Kit joined the Blues. Once a week he went to the Armory, put on a blue uniform and drilled with some two hundred other boys. He liked the drilling, and never had much difficulty with it.

When he had been in the Blues about a year the

Commander (who when not so engaged was a real live Lieutenant in the National Guard) read out a list of promotions, and among the corporals the name of Newell rang out rich and clear. Kit trembled and perspired with pride. The honor was wholly unexpected.

The new officers were ordered to take charge of their commands at once. In the drill all went smoothly for Kit, for every boy acted as corporal once in a while and he had led his squad before. But when the drill was over the corporals were supposed to see that their men put their rifles in the racks, each in its assigned place, before they went to the dressing room. And here danger lay.

A sergeant pointed out to Kit that one of his squad's rifles was missing from its place, just as he thought his responsibility was ended and he was rushing off to change. His soul groaned, for he knew the rifle must belong to one Loman, a horrid little boy who shared with that unfortunate young man of Thermopylæ the inability to do anything properly.

The sergeant strolled away, leaving Kit to act. Instantly he was seized with a sort of panicky temptation, a goading, terrifying thing such as he had never known. Why not say nothing about it, let Loman put his rifle away when it pleased him, or do it for him, if he left it in the dressing room? Sensible, easy . . . only it wouldn't do. A corporal was a corporal. He was given the power to see that the right thing was done, and must use it.

Swallowing hard, miserable but determined, he hurried into the dressing room and found Loman taking off his uniform. "Loman, did you put your rifle up?"

"No," said Loman, glancing furtively at the thing beside him.

"Well, put it up, now."

"All right, my boy, after I'm dressed."

"No, now. Right now. Loman, do you hear? You're not supposed to go back on the floor after you've taken off your uniform."

"Well, mine's off now. Want me to go out in my underclothes?"

"Put it on again."

"Well, of all the nerve! Say, who do you think—"

"Go on. It's an order, Loman."

Here Loman became whiny. "Aw, say, Newell, I've gone on the floor a hundred times—"

"Loman, I'll give you five, and then I'll report you to the captain. One, two, three . . ."

Oh, the joy of seeing Loman take up the blue trousers, grumbling but conquered! Kit felt no resentment toward him, only a general contempt as for a person who never did things right. What thrilled him was the sense of power, the worthiness of a trust placed in him. Discipline was behind him, but he had actually made discipline function. The thing gave him joy, a sweeter and sharper joy than any thing or sensation had ever done; more than candy, or going to the theater, or Pollux even, or a lovely little bead-eyed brown bear he had worshiped when he was three.

IV

Occasionally in traveling between New York and Narragansett the Newells stopped off to visit Uncle Jeff and Aunt Ella, who lived in the town of Dimchurch on the Thames, above New London. Uncle Jeff was red and clean-shaven, and wore a heavy gold watch chain across his ample paunch. In his early years Kit thought he wore it to keep his stomach in

place. Aunt Ella was vague and thin, with prematurely white hair. Elise, their only child, was at this time what Dickens immortally calls a mature young lady, with a good deal of fluffy light hair under imperfect control. They all lived in a large yellow house with a two-story Ionic portico in front. You could see the great white pillars from in front of the drug store on the central green.

Kit for the most part liked these visits. He liked sleeping in an immense mahogany four-post bed; he liked washing in a little cubby-hole called a Dressing Room; he liked the musty mellow old smells of the house. But the visits had their inconvenient aspects.

"And what's the young man going to be when he grows up?" asked Uncle Jeff one night at supper. They had dinner in the middle of the day and supper at night.

Kit had been telling Fräulein, *sotto voce,* about some young pigeons he had been inspecting that afternoon. "Ach Fräulein, die kleinen Täubchen, die niedlichen—"

"Achtungk! Der Onkel!" whispered Fräulein penetratingly. Kit turned to catch his uncle's question and in so doing did not pay sufficient attention to a plate of bread he was passing. He put it down too soon, and it crashed into a gimcrack little dish holding candy and broke it.

Mama, "Kit, my *dear,* what *have* you done? Ella . . ."
Papa, "Ha! What gross carelessness!"
Fräulein, "Ungeschickt! Willst du nie achten lernen?"

simultaneously.

At home that would have been about all. But the three Newell relatives began talking and went on talk-

ing about the defunct dish with a cloying regret that was a thousand times worse than scolding.

"It doesn't matter at all, Marjorie, never mind. It was Wedgewood, I think—or was it Crown Derby? Look on the bottom, Elise."

"Worcester, Mama. It was a wedding present of Grandmother Frobisher, wasn't it?"

"No, indeed, it was never my mother's. It may have been Mother Newell's—"

"No, Ella, I think it was my Aunt Carrie's. She left most of her things to Mother. It was a pretty little thing."

"Yes, that lovely urn shape—"

"Yes, Aunt Carrie Benson. I wonder if she bought it when she went over in 'forty-three? Such a dear little shape, you don't see it any more. Never mind, Kit, it's all right."

In the obsequies Uncle Jeff's original question was entirely forgotten.

"I *hate* their old things!" said Kit that night to his mother. "What's the use in bothering about just *things?*"

"They have a great many old family things, and think a great deal of them, dear. Some people are that way. You must just be as careful as you can."

Uncle Jeff was owner, president, king or something of the prodigious affair known as the Works, a huge sprawling red brick building down by the river. One day his father took Kit down there, and Uncle Jeff showed them all over the place. There were long huge rooms full of machines that revolved and rolled and went up and down and back and forth at a high rate of speed and made such a noise you couldn't hear unless you shouted. (The phrase is Kit's own.) In their uncanny way they were fascinating, these ma-

chines. Men in overalls worked them, or women, pale and pasty-looking, in dirty white shirtwaists.

One of the overalled persons attempted to show Kit how one of the machines worked. Kit couldn't hear much for the racket, but the man held up a little flat shapeless piece of metal for him to see and then put it into the machine's mouth. The machine chewed it, stamped on it, cuffed it in the face, stabbed it in the back and lo! the fragment emerged below as the safety part of a safety pin, perfectly articulate. At another machine the pin parts were bent, at another they were joined to the safety parts. And so on, with nails, hooks, eyes, curtain rings and many other things. One of the men gave Kit a necklace made of safety pins of different sizes all pinned together, and he wore it the rest of the day.

"And how did the Young Man like the Works?" inquired Uncle Jeff when they were back in his office. "Think you'd like to come and work in them?"

"I think they're fine, Uncle Jeff. But I wouldn't like to stay in them."

"And why not?"

"Too much noise."

"Pooh! You get used to that. The noise deafens you at first, but after a while you get so you can hear a whisper through it."

"Really?" said Kit.

"Can you hear the still, small voice through it?" asked Kit's father, smiling behind his mustache.

"Nowhere better, George," said Uncle Jeff, a trifle tartly.

V

Fräulein Rock was given her *congé* when Kit was eleven. Most of the following year the Newells spent

abroad. Then came that great September day, Kit being a little under thirteen, when his father took him to the village of Hillton in Massachusetts and left him at school there.

Kit entirely approved of the step. Carmichael boys went to Hillton, and spoke well of it; it was to Carmichael's a sort of Nirvana. On the other side of Hillton, a kind of super-Nirvana, lay college, in Kit's case, Yale. That all had to be gone through.

But he was nervous. All through the train journey he rubbed his clammy hands together and passed them over his hot forehead. The only cessation came when a youth of advanced years (as much as sixteen, probably), faultless and nonchalant, whom Kit had watched covertly since he got into the train, bought an *Argosy* of a newsboy that went screaming through the car. Kit also bought an *Argosy,* and buried his nose in it.

The hardest part was in the bus that took them to the school, amid a crowd of boys who shouted and embraced and thumped each other, while Kit had to sit, grinning and out of it, beside his father.

They got out and went into the yawning entrance of a great clean stucco building. Followed an official five minutes in the headmaster's study, and the first breathless visit to the schoolroom and the assigned cubicle. Kit was almost at ease now, and avid with interest. And then his father had to go.

Pains racked his throat as he kissed his father good-by. His father's face looked thin and lined; his finger joints were swollen. It was horrible to see his father, his last link with the known world, depart looking so ill and miserable.

In twenty-four hours that was entirely forgotten, and the first awful strangeness had gone for all time.

Kit flourished. He got on well in his sports and in his studies, and with the other boys. He sniggered behind desk covers, he worshiped Captains and Prefects, he made his perspiring efforts on the football field, he dared others to step into dead-cold showers, he discovered that Gaul was divided into three parts. He made friends and enemies in his own form, as good little boys are expected to do. And then, just as he reached his first confidence, he began to feel also a curious impatience, a small but genuine stirring of social impulse.

In his baker's dozen years of life he had developed, spontaneously and quite unconsciously, a taste for and interest in several odd little subjects. One was Roman coins. He had silver denarii of all the emperors from Augustus to Constantine, and one of the rare gold Antinoüs pieces that had cost him a whole birthday present check. In his trip abroad he had picked up a smattering of Gothic cathedral lore; he talked of Early English and Perpendicular and Apses and Piscina. In a less degree he was interested in butterflies, and had a modest collection. He had supposed, in his innocence, that all the boys in his form had interests or hobbies of a similar nature. In this he found himself wrong, quite, quite wrong.

There was a little literary club in the first form which met every fortnight under the supervision of a master. Before this in his first October Kit read a paper on English cathedrals. He had worked it up with considerable love and care, and had sent home for picture postcards by way of illustration. The master responded sympathetically to this effort, but the boys, so entirely friendly elsewhere, greeted it with cold and silent dislike. Frankly, they were bored, and hated Kit for boring them. Moreover, they consid-

ered his obvious interest a breach of good form; these meetings were compulsory and hated affairs; the papers were dug out of the Encyclopedia Britannica in haste and loathing. For the first time in his life Kit found himself sharply at variance with his community.

He swallowed down his wrath till the next time he read a paper before that gathering, which was in April of the same year. He made his lecture short and personal. He told his hearers, in approximate terms, that they were an aggregation of intellectual flat tires. Sport they liked, study they had to devote some attention to or be disgraced; beyond that life was a blank to them. The only respectable subjects of conversation among them were guns, automobiles, athletic records and musical shows. He did not despise these things, or ask his hearers to love the things he loved. He wished merely to suggest that the world was full of a number of things, that sooner or later they would all have to develop an interest in at least one of them, and that therefore some looking round might be of good account. He also suggested that if they were incapable of looking themselves they might at least spare their scorn for those who did care to look.

He had acquired, among other tastes, one for Dickens, and this gave him a suggestion for his final shaft. "It seems to me"—and how his voice would tremble as he read!—"that some people go through life with their minds half paralyzed. They're like that woman in *Little Dorrit,* by Dickens, who would never think of anything that wasn't perfectly proper, placid and pleasant. Her idea of things that answered to that description was Papa, Potatoes, Poultry, Prunes and Prisms. I wonder how much better those

of us are who never think of anything but athletics, automobiles, guns and musical shows?"

The meeting drew a long silent breath and then broke loose.

"Well, of all the nerve!"

"Of all conceited speeches!"

"Who told you you had a mind, Newell?"

"Yes, what did you get on your last report, Newell?"

"You ought not to go round with a bunch of dubs like us!"

"Old Doctor Newell!"

Kit sat weathering the storm, with a grin on his face and despair in his heart. He regretted his boldness now—and yet he would not regret it. The master dismissed the meeting with a kindly word about its being an interesting paper, and Kit, in order to postpone the moment when he would have to meet them again, lingered behind. "Well, I've done for myself this time," he said.

"I don't really think so," said the master. "Boys like courage. If they'd really resented what you said —I'm not sure that you understand this—they wouldn't have come back at you the way they did. They'd have let you alone, then and forever after."

Kit went back to his cubicle chewing over this comforting thought. The dormitory was still buzzing over him. Shafts flew at him, which he either ignored or parried lightly. He went to bed; the buzzing still went on. He was aware of it; he was no longer alarmed at it, but he was curious, immensely curious and deeply, incomprehensibly anxious.

"Oh, Newell's all right," he heard one voice emerge from the chatter to announce, "only he's so . . ." The rest was lost. Kit lay wondering. What had

that boy said? He was all right at bottom; he got on. Only he was so—something. He felt it, he agreed entirely. Only what was it?

"What kind of a guy am I?" he asked the dark. "Oh, if I only knew, if I only knew! Why can't I know? Why haven't I got a *right* to know?"

VI

One of Kit's best friends in his form was a certain Leonard Thomson, a big, athletic, fair-haired boy. He had no particular brains himself, but he had a vast tolerance for those who had, as indeed for almost everything. This good nature, together with his physical abilities, made him universally popular.

One vacation Leonard asked Kit to visit him at his home, which was in a suburb of Boston. Kit accepted with eagerness, and found himself in a new world. The house was small, dingy and full of children. There was only one servant; she was a Swede and cooked things in the kitchen that smelt genially all over the house and were passed at table by members of the family. The furniture was all old and worn and not very sightly. The bed on which Kit slept, a cot put up in Leonard's room, was hard and lumpy.

The truth was, as Leonard told him with complete absence of bad feeling, that the Thomsons were desperately poor. "I'd never have gone to Hillton, you know, except for that scholarship. I was lucky to get it—I'm such a bonehead. It would have been high school for me if I hadn't got it. The poor old governor's having an awful time getting us educated. He has nothing but his salary, and that's only five thousand a year."

"Well," said Kit rapidly, "I don't see that it mat-

ters much. You've got all you need, and you're going to the best school in the country. And nothing ever seems to worry any of you."

"It does, though," said Leonard, frowning. "Mother worries a lot, though she doesn't show it. So does Dad. It's hell to be poor, Kit."

Kit was inclined to agree. He hated kitchen smells and lumpy beds and holes in the carpet and thin cream at breakfast. He had never lived among these things, had barely known what they were. His own family, he took it, were not poor; but neither were they rich. People like the Hoffingtons were rich; they lived in marble palaces on Fifth Avenue with ballrooms and Gainsboroughs and a great many footmen in the hall. Still, his people must have a good deal more than the Thomsons. At least twice as much, perhaps three times.

VII

One morning in his second year at Hillton Kit was called out of class into the headmaster's study. "Your father's ill, Christopher, and you're to go home at once. Pack your bag and be ready to take the two-twelve."

Kit had known that his father had been much worse during the past months. "Is he going to die, sir?" he asked, stammering.

"I don't know. I hope not. The telegram doesn't say." He pushed a yellow paper toward Kit, who read: "Mr. Newell very ill please send Kit at once Marjorie Newell."

It was easier, having seen that telegram. All the way to New York Kit was glad that he had seen it. It was terrible not to know more, but it was something to know all that could be known.

At home he found out; it was a matter of days, perhaps hours. His father lay with closed eyes, under opiates most of the time; death was a thing to be welcomed, not feared.

During one of his father's conscious periods Kit was taken into the room. Mr. Newell held his hand and smiled faintly. "Good-by, dear boy," he said. "You'll be all right, I think." And that was the last Kit saw of him alive.

It was beautiful, it was inspiring: the vast unbridgable distance between them, and this deft casual dismissal of it. Kit knew that his father, however much he loved, pitied, hoped and prayed for him, was powerless to say anything of all that. And yet in those few easy words, "You'll be all right, I think," he said it all.

His mother was calm and beautiful in her black. Kit wondered where all those black clothes suddenly appeared from, but he did not like to ask. He did not have to ask questions; he merely did what he was told. Everything was very smooth, very quiet, very solemn, and when he went back to school, on the third day after the funeral, he went without tears.

VIII

Years of calm and happy growth ensued. Warned by his experience in the literary club—warned rather by his own subsequent uneasiness than any harm coming from without—he made no more revolutionary advances. Things like that were better thought than said.

At home things went much as before. After the first year of her mourning Mrs. Newell began to go

about more than she had for years. She was glad to entertain for Kit during vacations; she gave dinners, dances, theater parties. She went to the theater with him, almost indiscriminate in her middle age and her son's developing manhood. She sat with him through Alla Nazimova in "The Comet," inwardly laughing, wondering if he understood, hoping that he didn't, that he did. Kit on his side was indifferent to quality; what he wanted was quantity. He bowed to the schoolboy's necessity of having an imposing list of plays seen during vacation.

Habitually, after being out late, Kit would awake in the morning and lie thinking, physically lazy and mentally alert. The room was his old nursery, with all the furniture changed. Nana was gone, Pollux was gone, the very wall paper was gone; but he was still the same Kit. Was he, though? Couldn't one be as different from oneself as from other people? Some one had said something of the sort.

Who am I? lazy little voices in him kept wondering, and in this matutinal peace he let them wonder on. *What am I? What am I here for? What will I be fifty years hence? A hundred? . . .*

A certain amount of that made him impatient; he got up, threw on a bathrobe and shuffled whistling into the bathroom. He got into a warm tub, and as he lay contemplating his own unclothed body through the light green water his mood of speculation returned to him. The legs and arms, economically built, useless in these days of relaxation but proudly effective on the athletic field; the smooth yet knotty trunk; the virginal soft skin; the sprouting flocks of useless little hairs—how strange, how infinitely suggestive. His own, yet not his own; utterly beyond his control, yet instinct with his very being. A temple, the boringly

righteous said. That was all blat; but there was truth hidden behind it.

Then he would scrub vigorously, making that clean thing that was his own yet not his own even cleaner, unnecessarily and joyfully clean. He would dress, go downstairs, devour an enormous breakfast and forget everything in plans for the day.

Every summer he and his mother went abroad. They would spend a month in England, mostly in London, a fortnight in Paris and the rest of the time in some place like Evian or Grenoble or St. Moritz. The changing panorama of places, people and hotels was never boring, but it became largely a routine, a thing to be gone through for the sake of his mother and her annual harvest of Paris gowns.

He was always glad to go back to school, though there was no time there for his early morning meditations. To wake up there was to get up, but it was always interesting to be up. His powers increased with his stature; he rose steadily and easily through the forms; he became third base on the school nine, an editor of the *Hilltonian,* a prefect. Then, almost before he had a chance to enjoy the fullness of it, that stage was over; he was ready for college.

At this time—and he did not change much for years—his outstanding physical attributes were as follows. Height, five feet eight; weight, 150 pounds; a light olive skin; dark hair and dark gray eyes. Nose short and straight, mouth broad, forehead vertical and rather high. He wore his hair parted in the middle, whence it fell smoothly down on each side. The lines thus formed, together with a certain angularity of the lower jaw bones, gave his face when viewed from the front a roughly hexagonal shape. This was often noticed by girls, and considered rather attractive.

CHAPTER III

I

KIT sat in his room in Wright Hall, trying to study and palpitating uncontrollably. A tremendous thing was about to happen: Jack Caslon was coming to room with him. Kit's first roommate, whom he had inherited from Hillton, had broken down and left college, and Kit had immediately asked Jack Caslon to replace him. To-night, after some delay, he was actually coming.

Jack was so inextricably part of the daily texture of chapel, recitations, the Post Office crowd and the swarming groups in dormitory rooms that Kit could not remember when he had first seen him. But he remembered very well his first real talk with him. A whole crowd of them had gone to the movies one evening; he found himself beside Jack as they walked home and Jack had begun talking about California in his eager, forthputting, humorous way. By the time they reached the Campus this blond, blue-eyed, unnoticeable classmate had, in some unaccountable way, become the most important person in Yale.

A step on the stair; the door opened and Jack appeared, between two suitcases. His first remark was the name of the Savior. The word bore some ostensible reference to the weight of the suitcases, but it was primarily used as decent covering to an emotional moment. Jack was often blasphemous, but not that time.

"So there you are," said Kit fatuously.

"No," said Jack, "I may seem to be here, but my heart's in the hielands, of Fayerweather. Did you ever live on a fifth floor, without an elevator? It's an experience. The place reeks with your kinetic energy. When I die and am collected and called home, a large item of me will hurry from the conscious steps of Fayerweather.—This my room?"

He stood in the bedroom he was to occupy, still hatted and coated, and stared about. "How bare and cold this place looks! Got to change all that. Pers'nality—the great interior decorator. The one thing that can make a room look like a room, and not a mere place intended for human habitation.—These portraits of my mother and sister—I don't insist they're handsome, but what an air they impart to that uninteresting piece of furniture!" He slammed them down on the chiffonier and regarded them. "Pers'nality! The—the thief of nonentity. Epigram. And this will be my shirt drawer."

After he had hung some neckties over the electric light, scattered shoes all over the floor, spilled a bottle of hair oil on the bed and otherwise invested the place with the stamp of his individuality, he returned to the study. "We will now devote a quiet hour to Work," he announced. "Livy. You've read some? Well, you may go over what you've translated, slowly and elegantly, explaining the more obscure points of syntax as you go."

For an hour they read Livy. When they reached the point where Kit had left off Jack went blithely ahead, unhampered by grammar but always approximating the sense of the passage. At the end of the assignment Jack threw his arms behind his head and the book on the floor, and whistled.

"Kit Newell. A neat and suggestive name. New

Kittle. Nit Kewell, Kew Nittle, Two Nickel, Tin Wekell—how many are there, I wonder? Well, New Kittle, we're here because we're here because we're here because we're here. I wonder what will come of it."

"Nothing very alarming," said Kit.

"I don't know. I don't know . . . Have you any idea of the devastating effect of perpetual companionship? What possibilities for hatred lie in a favorite tune whistled indiscriminately, or a certain manner of chewing cornflakes?"

"Oh," said Kit, "I'm not afraid. No doubt I shall be damnably irritated with you, often, and you with me. But . . . I don't think it will matter. Be normal about things, and things'll be normal about you."

Jack smiled, but without comfort. "That's a strong and pleasant philosophy, and it fits you well. But it doesn't fit a guy like me, who'm never in control of the incidental. I have a badly-ordered type of mind. You have a well-ordered one, and—"

Kit got up and lightly mussed Jack's hair. "You're an ass," he said, sitting down on the arm of Jack's chair. "But go on. Tell me some more about yourself.—Gosh, what a silly thing to say! I never said it before."

"No," said Jack, "I'm embarrassed. You tell me about you."

"Well . . . I'm a perfectly normal and conventional person. I've always lived in a brick and brownstone house on Park Avenue, and my family were cultivated, conservative, conventional people such as foreigners don't believe exist in this country. Not much education, but plenty of cultivation . . . We're of New England stock. My grandfather moved to New York."

"And you?"

"As a kid I was spoiled, but I think I got over that. For the rest, I'm a Hilltonian; I believe that about says it. I'm absolutely conventional. There's nothing interesting about me." Jack said nothing. "Now you go on."

Jack leaned back against Kit's shoulder, staring at the fire. "I'm a Californian, and I don't like California. I'm in that unfortunate position. Oh, I grant it a lot. You can't live there without admitting it's great. But I'm not in the least interested in whether Los Angeles is a better place than San Francisco. I'm not interested in ranch life, or riding out in those dusty mountains. I don't care about movie queens or country clubs or automobiles or horses. . . . The one thing I've always loved about California is the little quail that fly out of the road in front of you. They're so small and neat and un-Californian. They're like England. The Californians don't care for them, because they're small . . ."

"This isn't about yourself," Kit remarked.

"But it is, it's the whole thing! I've lived mostly in Oakland, which as you know is a dump across the bay from San Francisco. And I went to a bum little school up in the mountains. It was supposed to be a healthy outdoor life, and God! it was. Every Saturday we strapped our damned packs on our horses and went off on a trip. Oh, those camping trips! You know I never could tighten a cinch properly. I never could clean a saucepan so that it didn't taste of the last time the next time. Every minute I could take off I was reading H. G. Wells or meditating on the nature of beauty. That didn't go big on those trips —oh, it didn't!"

They laughed. "Go on," said Kit.

"Well, there wasn't enough money to send me to school in the East, but Father's a Yale man and he always intended to send me here. And when I came it was like a release. I thought I was going to be in my element for once in my life. But . . ." A long pause. "It didn't work out that way."

Kit got up. "I mean," said Jack, "I have eastern longings, but my upbringing and manners are western. You see? I'm a misfit in both places. And people know it—oh, they know it."

"That isn't true," said Kit, impatient and somewhat worried. "You know a nice lot of fellows. I met you with Freddy Drake and Crowninshield and that bunch."

"Tagging on. We eat at the same joint, and I tagged on one night after dinner. They don't like me."

"They would if they knew you."

"They'd know me if they liked me."

The tone was bitter. Kit hesitated; the talk had got into deeper water than he liked. He wondered if he hadn't better get back to the shallows. Wiser perhaps—but something in the sight of Jack made him go on.

"See here, Cheltenham . . . if you call me New Kittle I can call you Cheltenham, can't I?" Jack grinned slightly. "I don't know what I'm blundering into, but . . . See here, aren't you a happy man?"

"I'm telling you," said Jack in a low harsh voice, his hand over his eyes. "I expected a lot of this place. The very name of New Haven used to send thrills through me. Then I got here, and found I couldn't get on here any better than in the West. And it was hell, simple hell. Then you came."

"And hell became hotter?"

Jack jerked one hand angrily. "How's one to say these things? It was like . . . rain in the desert. I don't believe I've ever been really liked before. And when you asked me to come over here . . . Kit, if we don't get on together—I'll go back to California!"

"We shall get on," said Kit, very light, bent on receding.

The speech seemed to arouse Jack. He got up and stood facing Kit with one elbow on the mantel. "You don't understand. I hadn't thought of threshing this out. I thought I'd at least have the time till you found out for yourself, but . . . See here, I'm not the kind of man you want to room with. Your friends all think it's a shame you tried it. I'm not your kind. I'm cheap, *bum*. I'm going to be the kind that never gets on in the class, a sort of pariah."

"Well?" said Kit.

"Well, don't be disappointed when you find out."

"I won't," said Kit. He liked the courage of Jack's speech so immensely that he disregarded the import of it. He held Jack's eyes avidly. "Now tell me, what's all this got to do with the price of putty?"

Caslon dropped his eyes and walked quickly off. He aligned his knee caps under the window seat and stared out the window. "All right. There isn't anything one can say . . . Yes, there is, though, one more thing. I may as well say it, now that we've gone so far. If I have a hope, it's you. If you begin this thing, for God's sake finish it. Give me up now, if you're not sure you can. I can stand it now. But not later. If you went on and then gave up, it would be simply . . ."

His voice died, and then the panic really came. Kit knew that this was true. He had seen certain things in Jack. Affection had palliated them, but had not

made him blind. When affection died, what then? Hadn't he better accept honorable withdrawal, now that it was offered?

But affection was not going to die, less than ever since Jack had spoken like this. "I'll go on," he heard himself saying, "and I'll stay on. See?"

Jack's voice came hoarsely: "I believe you will." He inhaled deeply and moved away, jingling the change in his pocket. "Well, that's that. To-morrow we'll be gassing about as usual. You'll be calling me Cheltenham Bold, and I'll be pretending to order you round. We'll never come back to this. Only, don't forget. Kit, don't forget."

"I won't forget," said Kit, apparently bored. "It's after twelve. Let's get to bed."

II

All this was totally unexpected, undesired, even. He had anticipated an easy, more or less inarticulate intimacy of the usual kind. But the thing was done: Jack's need had forced on him a responsibility which he did not dream of shirking. He lost no sleep over it, but the next day he remembered and used his head.

He breakfasted and went to chapel with Jack and they parted at the hour of the first recitation. When they met in their room after lunch he had made up his mind, and spoke out of clear silence.

"By the way, you could be a little less festive in speaking to people on the Campus. And have you any plain white shirts?"

Jack had jerked round to him at the first word. Kit smiled calmly back at his angry stare. "You think I'm tactless, taking up at noon what we left off at midnight. But you see the point?"

Jack gulped once or twice and inspected a book. "Yes, I see. About this speaking business . . ."

"Well, casual, but cheerful. Don't go to the other extreme, and be curt and snotty. Be glad to see people, but not too *darned* glad."

"Yes. And the shirts? I'll have to buy some."

"Soft ones. And be sure the collars button down. —Then there's another thing, more important. You're not out for any extra-curriculum stunt, are you? Well, I think it's absolutely necessary. We must look over the field carefully, and decide what's best for you. It doesn't matter much how bum you are at it."

"I'll heel the *Lit.,*" said Jack, grinning faintly. "I thought I wouldn't, because it's a stuffy old thing, but if this is a command . . ."

"And the *Record.* I think your sense of humor's your greatest asset.—And Jack!"

"What?"

"A little less sense of humor to people you don't know well—especially at breakfast!" He saw Jack's lip begin to curl and left off quickly, well pleased.

And so that relationship expanded and bore fruit. Kit had expected many things of college, but not a tutorship, voluntarily assumed, over one of his own age. Not responsibility. And yet it was that responsibility that came to give him more pleasure than all else. That was chiefly because of his love for Jack, no doubt; and yet he had felt something a little like it once, ages ago, over a half-dressed little rat called Loman.

Gradually it became clear that he was helping Jack in the eyes of the world. Jack had a good mind, a sense of humor and artistic discrimination, but he was gauche and shy and had the paralyzing effusiveness

of those who do not know how to be shy becomingly. He also had radical views on certain undergraduate affairs which, until Kit stopped him, he would express with a blasting disregard for the amenities.

"You must not do that," Kit told him. "You can be as radical as you like, but you simply must not talk radicalism till you know how."

"I will not compromise my opinions," retorted Jack with asperity. "They're the only honest thing about me."

"But that's exactly what you're doing! You make people dislike and despise your opinions when you go on as you do."

"But if I shut up it's cowardly."

"It's not cowardly to learn discretion in methods. It's asinine not to. It's disloyal to your opinions not to learn how to state them acceptably."

Put like that, the truth would conquer even Jack's obstinacy and shyness. His sense of humor, his most saving quality, suddenly came out. "Gosh, I believe you're right!" he said with a sudden grin. "Kit Newell, New Kittle, you boil clean. I believe your boiling will refine me yet. He is li-i-ike—a refi-i-i-i-i-i-iner's fi-i-ire," he chanted. "That's from the *Messiah,*" he added, and shut up abruptly.

III

But the benefits of the relationship were not all on one side. Jack was far better read than Kit, and stimulated him to familiarity with such figures as William Morris, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Benvenuto Cellini, Boswell and Walter Pater. Kit took to the poets most, especially Arnold. There was a silver perfection in his words that enchanted him. Jack

smiled at this worship, but admitted that he had gone through the same stage.

"Gone through?" objected Kit. "You mean you don't like him any more?"

"I take him with a pinch of salt. A man is himself and his works together, and Arnold was an awful old ass. Somebody said when he died that it was too bad: he wouldn't like God."

"God would like this," said Kit solemnly, and read:

> "Time, so complained of,
> Who to no one man
> Shows partiality,
> Brings round to all men
> Some undimmed hours.

Or this:

> "Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
> Let the victors when they come,
> When the forts of folly fall,
> Find thy body by the wall!

The forts of folly! Gosh!"

"Yes," admitted Jack.

Some inkling came to Kit a few days later when, one Sunday afternoon, they went to call on a lady who had been a friend of Jack's father. Her father, it transpired, had entertained Matthew Arnold when he was in New Haven in '83. Kit was agog.

"Tell me about him," he urged. "What did he look like? What did he say?"

Mrs. Lester laughed. "I'm afraid no one here cherishes very affectionate memories of him. He simply ignored me—that was all right, because I was

a conceited snip. But I can't forget his attitude toward my father and mother. He referred to one dish, I remember, as 'not so nasty as it looked.' "

"But is that all you remember? Didn't he make any other impression?"

"I remember him as a bore and a boor. But that was partly my fault, no doubt."

Kit felt foolish. Here was something that Jack understood and he did not. He could not reconcile his disgust with Arnold the man with his admiration of Arnold the poet. He said as much on the way home, his arm in Jack's.

"That, my boy," said Jack, "is because you've never tried to do anything, and failed."

"Haven't I?" said Kit. "Perhaps that's true. But what's it got to do with Arnold?"

"He succeeded in poetry, but he failed in life, though presumably he tried. With most people it's the other way. Almost every one fails in something."

"Which is worse," mused Kit, "to fail in your work or in your character?"

"Success in work brings immortality on earth. Success in character is supposed to give one a better chance of immortality beyond. It's a question of which you prefer."

"I prefer both . . . But this is a terrifying thought. I've got to fail in something. What shall it be?"

Jack, walking jauntily along, pressed his arm. "That'll come, soon enough. Only don't let it be in humility, or the m. of h. k."

"The which?"

"Milk of human kindness, you boob."

Kit had at such times a quite vivid sense of sitting at Jack's feet and learning.

IV

Paramount as Jack's case was in importance, there were other things that took a greater share of Kit's time and even his thoughts. He very much wanted to "succeed" in college. There was his baseball, which would take him far. He played third base on his freshman nine and by senior year would doubtless hold down the same position on the 'varsity. But baseball left half the year vacant, and during the extra time he elected to heel the *News*.

He became so interested that he heeled it through two long competitions, finally making his editorship. He was amazed at the diversity of things he learned and the number of unexpected things it set him to doing. He used his brain in new ways, from office-boy jobs to editorials; he met a great many "interesting" people and acquired an impression that his character was developing fast.

For the rest, he did the respectable undergraduate things. He went out on Sunday afternoon calling expeditions and to dances. He wasted a great deal of time at Mory's and the movies. He became particular about his shoes and neckties. He bought a great many pipes. He read a fair amount. He dreamed of learning to play the piano.

In the fall of sophomore year he was taken into a junior fraternity. The experience gave him a slight emotional thrill and an enlarged circle of acquaintances, especially among the two upper classes, but nothing more. This he carefully explained to Jack, who had not been favored. But Jack was presently admitted to the Elizabethan Club, from which point of vantage he could view fraternities with a fishy stare.

Then there were other friends, of course. Kit's were chiefly from the old Hillton and New York groups, with numerous accretions from other schools. These constituted the "swell" wing of the big men in the class; they generally rowed or played hockey for a living, served on Prom Committees and were normally slated for Keys rather than Bones. They were slightly less dull in outward seeming than the Big Athlete wing, and stood nearly as high in the public estimation. Len Thomson and Dick Hoffington were typical of this class. The big athletes, such as Harry Colt and Mac Hillyer, remained a little out of Kit's beat, though he was on good terms with them all.

Jack's chief assets were from the literary crowd and generally art-conscious. One Jennings Cobb, a Roman Catholic out of Maryland, a poet and probable *Lit.* chairman, and his roommate Flash Merwin, a pink-cheeked little cherub who drew for the *Record* and acted, were the most important. These two roomed across the hall from Kit and Jack in sophomore year; they were Kit's friends as well as Jack's, and in the four of them the art-conscious and the "swells" might be said to overlap and fuse. The two groups met on common ground in Kit's room, where they would view each other through a haze of cigarette smoke and mild surprise.

One night there had been the usual mixed crowd of them strolling in and out, and Len Thomson and Dick Hoffington found themselves alone following a general exit to look up "mandrake" in Jen Cobb's dictionary. They thought Kit had gone with the others, but as a matter of fact he sat in his bedroom, writing, and heard all they said.

"Old Man Newell, he likes 'em mixed," said Len

with yawn. "Well, I see his point. Good things, brains. Those guys'll be heard more from after college than the nitwits that go big now."

"I don't agree," said Dick. "I'm glad I row, for my part. And friend Kit's equally glad he's a peerless infielder, at bottom."

"I don't know. He's got other things in him. That came out at school." (Dick had patronized St. Mark's.)

"He's got a taste for queer birds, if that's what you mean. Always had, from a kid."

"You mean Caslon? He's not a bad fellow, Dick. Kit's done a lot with him."

"He goes. I don't want him, but he goes.—Len, did you ever suspect Kit of being something of—a Christer? I don't like the word, but there's no other that fits. . . . Oh, not in the tight old way, but . . . something of the sort, somewhere."

"I don't know. Church and all that bores him, I think."

"Oh, who doesn't it?" said Dick; a remark saved from complete odiousness by a certain boyish honesty. "What I mean is . . . look here. Does Kit read Matthew Arnold for the pure love of letters, or partly for Jack Caslon's sake?"

"The former, I should say. He's literary, sort of, by nature."

"He's also a third baseman by nature, and thinks more of that for the simple reason that it brings him more. Don't tell me. It's funny—the two people I've known him to be keenest on—the only two I've known him to be really keen on—were both the kind that could do with being Saved. Not for the next world, you know, just this. Still . . ."

"May be," said Len, yawning again. There was

a pause as their interest died, and Kit called in from his room: "Go on. I'm awf'ly interested."

The two snorted, not really embarrassed, trusting Kit. "Lucky for you we're good-natured," called Dick.

"Lucky for you I am."

Len wandered into the bedroom, placed his hands on the back of Kit's spring chair and bore down on it. They contemplated each other's faces in reverse. "Kit, old sow, you're not—?"

"Lord, no. I'd have yelled."

"It was just gas."

"On the contrary, it was most illuminating.—Illuminating gas!—No. Do you know, it finished out a conversation I heard begun at school, years ago. . . . Run along and play. Economics to do."

When Len had gone he took a piece of paper and wrote: "I am a triangle of impulses—intellectual, physical and something that's both religious and social. Mind, body, morals. The triangle is equilateral, and that's the devil of it. With most people the triangle is isoceles, generally scalene.—How near the truth is that?"

V

Several times a term he descended on New York and danced. He soon decided that the most successful débutante of the epoch was Maud Hoffington. She had grown up beautiful, chiefly by virtue of her complexion, which was of the transparent, mother-of-pearl type, rising to faint rose shades. She was very sweet and quite unspoiled. Kit scanned her closely for traces of her brother's snobbishness, a thing he could stand in him but not in her. He found nothing.

In sophomore year he had her up for the Prom.

She sat in his feverishly tidy study and made canary sounds that rang strangely in Durfee. "Mr. Caslon, why does Kit call you Chelt? I understand why you call him New Kittle, but . . . Oh, of course. I heard all about Cheltenham when I was seeing about the programs for the Junior League show. I was a Spanish dancer, Kit—you should have seen me! Oh, Kit, what do you think? Sophronia Spencer's coming—she must be here now! Bobby Vandermyll's bringing her. His mother's delighted, because since Cora married the chauffeur she's been watching his step every minute. So of course she simply dotes on Sophronia, who looks like a portrait of one's great-aunt—the plain one, who never married. His mother's coming up to chaperone, and I do so hope she'll wear her tiara. It's turquoises, Mr. Caslon, and looks as if she'd been collecting robins' eggs and stuck them on a gold toast rack. Oh, I do think people are marvelous!"

Kit's class thought she was, and hung over the furniture, fascinated.

"How do you get on with Jack?" inquired Kit during a dance.

"Beautifully. He doesn't dance so badly—really. And if his hair was brushed right— Do you know it's awfully clever of you to part your hair in the middle? With most people it wouldn't do, but—"

"What does Jack talk to you about?"

"You, mostly. *And* him!"

"And you?"

"Well, a little."

Kit smiled. "Have you got to the point of discussing whether you're 'sincere' with each other?"

"Yes, and it's quite delightful. We've decided we neither of us are, a bit!"

"Oh," groaned Kit, "that's fatal! That I should know jealousy, at my age!"

He was beaming. Maud, the conventional Maud, accepted Jack at his face value; he liked her the better for it; everything was fine. And Maud in some obscure way understood, and liked him better. It was a wonderful Prom.

He generally saw Maud when he went to town and one day, by way of variety, he took her to one of Aunt Emmy's strange gatherings in Eighth Street. Maud leaned over a case of Florentine ivories and giggled.

"Kit, they're so marvelous! That man, there, with the gold bangle, asked if he could paint me, the first thing he said, and another one came up and they had a long discussion about whether my hair was Bellini or Somebody Vecchio. Then that Vision in the green velvet bathrobe barged in and said, 'You two boys mustn't bore Miss Hoffington any longer,' and she started talking about the Junior League. I could have killed her. Greenwich Village—if this is it—is more fun than a French farce."

"It's funny," said Kit, "why Aunt Emmy likes it all so. She's a sweet old thing in her way. She gives them all tea, and lets them dream on. It's all the love of Art, I suppose. It's funny, though, how little Mother has of it. Merciful heavens—did you ever notice our drawing room furniture? Rosewood and tassels—my grandmother bought it in '51!"

"Yes. Rosewood's coming back, I hear."

"You don't say so. One can be fashionable once in a hundred years, I suppose, by just sitting tight.—Oh, dash it, some one's going to perform."

The black lid of the piano was fanning the air with a minatory gesture. "Hush, everybody!" yelled she

of the green velvet, clapping her hands. "Miss Vane's going to play the Schumann Fantaisie." A determined-looking young woman in a scant black gown sat down at the keyboard, rubbing her hands. Maud sank into a chair; Kit leaned against a Flemish tapestry.

The young woman in black was vigorous, and thorough. Her long sinewy arms made the startled piano fairly leap. Apparently it was Schumann's idea that it should. Kit felt that she and Schumann would have got on splendidly together.

"Her wind's O. K.," he whispered to Maud. "She's down on the punts every time, and she's hell broke loose in an open field."

Presently all that died away, and the end was a thing of dripping leaves at twilight. The black girl rose amid applause and bowed. Her face struck Kit. The mouth, slightly parted, accepted the homage, but the eyes were nugatory. The total effect was one of aloofness:—"Yes, yes, but you don't understand. Schumann meant something, and I'm not at all sure that I get it."

"My, she's wonderful!" said Maudie. "Who is she?"

"Her name's Mary Vane, and she comes from Cleveland. I've barely met her. She's staying with my aunt, I believe."

"I wonder if she'd come and play at our house some evening?—She looks so young—can't be more than seventeen."

They shook hands with Mary Vane on their way out. Her lower lip was still drooping in polite acknowledgment, her eyes still with Schumann and his madness. "Thank you, thank you very much," she said to every one in a deep but smooth voice. Kit approved of her arms, they were so slim and strong.

She seemed an ungainly creature by the side of Maud Hoffington, of course.

VI

Kit mentioned the Vane girl next evening to his mother, just before he went back to New Haven. "Oh, yes," said Mrs. Newell, "she's just come to New York to study for the concert stage. Emmy knew her mother years ago, and asked her to stay with her till she got settled. They took quite a fancy to each other, and I rather hope the arrangement will be permanent."

"Why, Mother?"

"Well, Emmy needs some one to watch her, and keep the worst of that crowd off. They simply *bleed* her, you know. . . . It's bad for a woman to live alone too long."

"You live alone, Mother."

"Oh, no. I have you."

"But not much."

"Enough to keep me from feeling too old. And you'll be back before long, when you go to the Columbia Law School."

"Am I going to the Columbia Law School?" asked Kit after a pause.

"Aren't you? I thought that was the idea." There was a note of apprehension in her voice, and Kit noted that any plan which would separate him permanently from her had better be discarded.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I haven't made up my mind. I'm rather thinking of newspaper work, since I heeled the *News*."

"Newspaper work!" said Mrs. Newell, plainly relieved. "Well, that'll keep you here, at any rate.

But why should you want to do that—going round interviewing actresses?—You're not bothered about the money, are you? Because you can go on studying just as long as you think best. Your allowance will go on, and you also get five thousand a year by your father's will when you're twenty-one."

Kit thought of Len Thomson's father's five thousand a year, and wondered if it had been increased. "That won't take too much from you, Mother? I can pay part of it back."

Mrs. Newell smiled. "No, dear, I shan't need it."

Kit stared at the wall paper. "Mother, I know you don't like to talk about money. But I'm going to be twenty-one in the fall, and . . ."

"Yes, dear? What is it?"

"I'd like to have some idea what our income—your income—is . . ."

"Yes, dear, I ought to have told you before. Why, the total income, on what my father left me and what your father left—I forget just how much each is—comes to very nearly eighty thousand a year."

Kit's head twitched round toward her. "Good heavens, as much as that? It's an awful lot, isn't it?"

"It isn't what you'd call immense wealth, but it's more than we need. There's always a surplus. I give away about twenty thousand, and the rest I invest."

"You spend twenty thousand a year *on charity?*"

"Why, yes. It seems mean not to. Do you think it's too much?"

"No, heavens no. But . . ."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Newell anxiously, "but what I ought to invest more, on your account. It's all yours, really. I love giving away, but—"

"No, Mother. Give away every penny you want.

Only I had no idea it was so much. We live pretty simply, don't we?"

"Perhaps you don't realize," said Mrs. Newell, still anxious, "how the expenses of an establishment, even with only five servants and a chauffeur, mount up. The taxes on the house alone are pretty terrific. And what with trips abroad and all, the yearly expenditure comes to about forty thousand. It seems wasteful, doesn't it?" she went on, with a feminine change of key. "When one thinks of all the people—"

"Twenty thousand's a fourth of your income," interrupted Kit, rising and kissing her. "As a miser, you're a failure. I've got to go, if I'm to catch the ten o'clock. Good-by, now. Take care of yourself."

This was the first time he had learned anything much about money since that talk with Len Thomson. His expenses were light, and he had never heard big money talk. The notion of his mother as a rich woman was entirely new, and staggering.

And she gave away more than a quarter of her income. Dead right. He would advise her to give away the whole surplus, and not invest anything, as far as he was concerned.

CHAPTER IV

I

IT was apropos of Kit's making the *News* board that he had his first important talk with Jack on the choice of a profession. Jack was inclined to view the *News* affair with alarm, and made no bones about saying so.

"The famous Yale competitive system," he said, "which is perfectly inoperative on a man who needs it, of course works like a charm in the case of a man who doesn't need it at all. If there's one thing in the world you don't need to be taught, it's getting little things done, on time. This'll make you a regular little monster of efficiency."

"Isn't efficiency a good thing to learn?"

"A man," said Jack with scorn, "who puts his laundry away the minute it comes home has all the efficiency it's healthy for him to have at twenty. His mind should be on higher things."

"A man," retorted Kit, "who leaves his laundry lying round his bedroom till he's ready to wear it, and actually sleeps under it because he's too lazy to take it off the bed, is a menace to society, and should be legally estopped.—Look here, what's college for, if not to teach us how to do things?"

"That," said Jack, blowing a cloud of cigarette smoke at the ceiling, "is what might be called the Aristotelian view of college. Well, it turns out good business men. And if this country didn't produce its business men it wouldn't produce a single first-class thing of its kind."

"Oh, my poor country! . . . I take it you're—what's the opposite of Aristotelian?"

"A Platonist? I am. I think the main mission of college is to show us *what* to do. The *how* can wait. Lord, how can there be any how until there's a what? How can you devise a method of dealing with life until you've established your attitude toward it?"

Kit sighed. "Something in that. I suppose you're right; I could be reasonably certain of doing almost anything methodically and neatly. As for the what, I can't say. I've thought of the law. Lately I've been thinking of newspaper work. And . . ."

"Well? Go on. What's 'and'? . . . Good heavens, you're not thinking of Christian endeavor?"

"Teaching, I was going to say."

Jack laughed. "It would be like you to think of teaching before you'd decided what to teach, or began to learn.—What made you think of teaching?"

Kit paused, grinning. "Its nobility."

"If you're out for nobility, what about the Church?"

"It's just a bit too noble, I suspect. A few hundred years ago I suppose I would have chosen that. Now—I don't know. The churches go in for being so alive and up-to-date. You hear so much about 'moral purpose' and 'practical Christianity' and 'religious education.' It's all right, I suppose. . . . No, I shan't be a parson."

"You'll be that noblest work of God, an American business man," said Jack, flinging his cigarette stub into the fireplace. "All this, I suppose, is just the Weltschmerz of adolescence.—Well, go ahead. There are worse things."

II

Jack was not much concerned, believing that this was Kit's probable destiny. But he was wrong; even at this time Kit had no idea of entering Business. He had read "The Research Magnificent," which came out about this time, and had been profoundly impressed by it. There was something, something to do which had never been done; to fail in which was better than succeeding in other things. Something which, he was quite sure, had nothing to do with commercial enterprise.

This refusal became articulate the following September when, at his mother's suggestion, he visited his relatives in Dimchurch. He had not been there for several years, and was now for the first time received as a man and an equal.

He took long walks through the yellowing country with Elise. Elise had passed forty and become constitutionally grim, but she could talk, and even had things to talk about.

"You're really a great business woman," Kit told her on one of these walks. "I didn't realize you did so much."

"Well, it's there to be done. Mother isn't strong enough, and she never did take to it much. Not that I take to it, either, but I can do it, with an effort."

"Why make the effort, if you'd rather do something else?"

"I wouldn't.—You must realize that in a position like ours, in a town like this, something is expected of you. And rightly, too. I mean, here's a town of six thousand inhabitants, and the Works gives a livelihood to about fifteen hundred of them. No other one thing employs a fraction as many. You can call

it industrial feudalism, if you like; there's nothing better been found. And at least we're alive to our responsibility."

"I see," said Kit, interested. "Tell me how you work it out."

"In several ways. In the first place, socially. We've got to set a standard—I don't mean snobbishness, but not receiving people who've misbehaved themselves, been remarried after divorce, and things like that. Then there's charity. We've got to give more than other people, simply because we have more. We've got to let them see that the money earned by the Works doesn't go into selfish luxury. Then in organization of the charities, and that's what takes the time. And then lastly, in the Works themselves."

"Oh. Profit sharing, things like that?"

"Dear, no. You should hear Father on Henry Ford —only don't talk to him about it. We're afraid of apoplexy.—But there are ways within the present system. For instance, Father ordered some new machines last year, and they wouldn't do. It was a pure mistake on his part. They weren't safe; they were liable to crush the operator's hands when they jammed. Well, Kit, a lot of employers would have hushed it up and paid compensation if anything happened and gone on using them. Not Father. He ordered new ones. Forty thousand dollars he's out on that mistake."

"Good old Uncle Jeff. People must like him."

"They do. And he's pretty liberal about wages. You know we haven't had a strike here in ten years?"

"Really. And business must be booming, with all these war orders?"

"Yes, it is. We're putting up a new wing; you must go down and take a look. Yes, it's as good a propo-

sition for its size as you can find anywhere. And . . . Father's getting old."

Kit felt his flesh begin to creep. He stared at the road, pushing his hands deep into his pockets. Elise went on lightly, intent on the landscape:

"He's over sixty, so of course we must expect him to fail. The incident of the machines shows that. Oh, he can go on for another ten years. But who's to take it up after that? It's a thousand pities I wasn't a boy.—What are you thinking of doing after college, Kit?"

Kit shook his head. "Nothing doing, I'm afraid, Elise. Manufacturing's not my line."

"How can you tell, till you've tried? Why, any one of average intelligence can make it his line. Especially with an ideal—family, and responsibility, and that sort of thing."

"You mean, I belong here, really. I see your point. But—"

"Of course I'm saying nothing of the attractiveness of the thing, from a financial point of view. Mother and I would have the house, and enough to live on in it comfortably, but the controlling interest in the Works would go to you."

"Gee, that's handsome enough. But—"

"But of course the main thing for you would be keeping up the old Newell tradition here. That does appeal to you, doesn't it?"

Kit wondered if Elise were acting as plenipotentiary for her father. "Yes, Elise, but the personal element counts. I've been brought up away from here, with other ideas and traditions. Very likely I'd let the whole thing down in no time. And then, I haven't got a business head. I've no desire to connect myself with a money-making concern. There's something else

I want to do—I can't tell you what. But it's there."

"You must talk with Father," finished Elise, undiscouraged. "He'll put it a great deal better than I have." And Kit understood then that the whole visit was a plant, with his mother an accomplice.

He listened patiently while Uncle Jeff outlined his proposition, which Elise had already indicated correctly. Uncle Jeff was as ruddy of hue as ever, but grayer as to hair, and slower in his movements. He was very kind.

"You think it over," he ended. "Keep it in your head, not as a thing you've got to do, or ought to do, but as a thing you *can* do. A lot of young fellows, you know, go to college and get their heads full of art and literature, and forget for a while that the good Lord intended them for business men. They come back to the idea, and the art and literature don't do any harm. . . . Only don't close your mind for good, that's all."

So he was a child to them still, being permitted to have his fling of intellectual wild oats. Were they perhaps right? "No," he decided, slowly and carefully, "I've no interest in making things. I've no interest in industrial affairs. I'm a child about money. I haven't got the business flair. Moreover, I don't feel called upon to jack up the manners and morals of the excellent people of Dimchurch. The thing simply can't be."

III

Meanwhile college absorbed him. Junior year led on to fresh woods and pastures new, abounding in ease and freedom. His attentions to Jack bore fruit; Jack made the *Lit.* board and a fraternity; in a small

way, he arrived. With all humility Kit knew that this success was his work, and felt the joy of effectiveness.

And Kit himself, with his baseball and his *News* editorship, was arriving in a much larger way. It became perfectly clear that he was "going" Keys. He was surprised to learn it, but was scornfully informed by the class authorities that the thing had been certain since the first term of freshman year. Best of all, Jack was not going to mind; he said as much, first in oblique terms, then in direct ones. The days sped along in anticipation, contentment and triviality, through the football season, the Christmas holidays, the Prom. It was good to be alive.

And then in mid-March, with paralyzing suddenness, the terrific thing happened. He had been home over a week-end, and on the Sunday night left his mother with a rather nasty cold. On Tuesday came a brief note from her, saying that she had gone to bed; the next day came one from Aunt Emmy, saying that pneumonia had developed, and not to be alarmed. But on the Thursday evening he was wired for, and on the Sunday his mother died.

It was unbelievably cruel and unnecessary. She was only fifty-one, a joy to all who knew her and an adorable mother. But almost from the first he summoned his powers to fight his grief and loneliness. His mother, he told himself, had lost nothing. It was right that he should miss her, but there must be no screaming to heaven. Jack helped enormously; his hand on Kit's shoulder gave reason to the world.

He returned to college with all possible speed, and not for two weeks did he return to talk with the lawyers. He wouldn't have done so then but that they became insistent. The gist of it was that Mrs.

Newell had had only a life interest in her husband's money; on her death it was all to go to Kit. Most of the principal was to be held in trust for him if he were under twenty-five; but the entire income was to be his when he reached the age of twenty-one. His mother's own fortune, amounting to some $300,000, went to him direct.

He had been twenty-one in December. He stood master of an income of, roughly speaking, eighty thousand a year.

IV

He began by giving Jack, in a quiet, falsely casual way, sets of books and pearl shirt studs. But these were mere drops in the bucket, and it was clear that after a certain point Jack would refuse to accept any more. He then took to writing large checks to charitable institutions, anything he knew the name of. The word got round; appeals came in till he had no difficulty in keeping his bank balance down to a reasonable figure. But he knew that this would not do. He was toying with tremendous possibilities, with the sacred fire of his youth. He must form some definite plan.

Tap Day came; he was absorbed into Keys along with Dick Hoffington and Jen Cobb and other congenial people. He became the first string third baseman on the 'varsity nine. The spring flew by in a golden haze, with the figure of his mother growing steadily dimmer, though no less dear, in the background. He made plans for his summer; he was going west with Jack, to inspect the Pacific Coast from San Diego to Vancouver. He would think heavily the while, and make up his mind.

And the summer passed in golden sunshine and

white mountains, while still the flame burned idle, untended.

He shrank from speaking of it to Jack; he envisaged Jack's intellectual superiority as a last resource, a thing to be approached only with a working hypothesis in mind. A man *must* evolve for himself the basic principles of his life.

On one thing he was adamant; he would not go into anything with the mere idea of keeping himself busy, or of making money. Here was a unique opportunity:—a human machine without encumbrances, either of circumstance or construction. Not to put it to its best use would be sacrilege. It was possible —there were as many uses in the world as there were people.

But this gave him no light. There was no absence of attractive prospects; newspaper work, teaching and archeology were now the chief ones. Probably he could succeed, in a reasonable measure, in any of them. That was just the trouble; jack-of-all-trades, master of none. He wished fervently that he had been given the specialized type of mind.

He came back across the continent alone, preceding Jack by a few weeks. On the train he thought a great deal, and one day in the smoking car his thoughts overflowed into speech. The recipient was a gray-mustached elderly gentleman with whom Kit formed an acquaintance of the common traveling type. He adopted the time-honored device of putting his own case as that of "a friend." He briefly sketched his own situation and character, and asked what the probable solution of that man's life would be.

"Eighty thousand a year," the elderly gentleman repeated, looking askance at his cigar. "That's roughly two million.—I should say a villa at some

place like Cannes for half the year, and the rest distributed between London, Paris and the Union Club."

Kit eyed him sidewise. "You don't understand, quite. This fellow's got—well, he's got what you might call ideals. He's interested in a lot of things—"

"Add a collection of Whistler etchings," broke in the E. G. "Or Sheraton furniture, or Egyptian mummies. Of course, if he's the bookworm type, you can make those the chief items. But if he's at all festive in character, the villa at Cannes about hits it."

"He's festive, to a certain extent, yes. But I don't think he cares much for—the delights of the flesh."

"Has he tried them yet?" inquired the E. G., and Kit shut up.

V

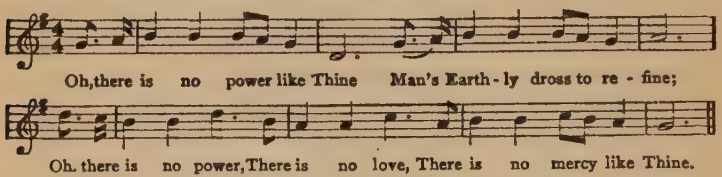
He did not think of it all the time, and the thought of it by no means spoiled his pleasure in life. But it got so that he could not think of it long without feeling bewildered, and he hated to confess that. He also feared that college, with its preoccupation over the immediate, was not going to help him much.

On the very first Sunday of the term he wandered off for a walk after lunch, alone. Jack had been delayed in returning, and would not be back till the morrow. Kit walked vaguely westward, bored, seeking the unfamiliar, into a dingy but not squalid region of little old wooden houses and larger new brick affairs, cheaply built. The street was intermittently shaded by elm trees, whose desiccated leaves made brown crackly litters on the pavement.

He heard a sound of singing, and presently came to a small wooden church. The door was open to the street, and Kit stopped to look in. The backs of the congregation were turned toward him, and the interior

of the church was bathed in half-gloom, but he could see that they were all negroes.

The hymn, which had been ringing in his ears for blocks, held him: a simple, jerky tune, strictly diatonic. The naïve words of the refrain became, after several repetitions, perfectly distinguishable.


Oh, there is no power like Thine Man's Earth-ly dross to re-fine;
Oh, there is no power, There is no love, There is no mercy like Thine.

As he stood listening a black-coated darky, evidently the sexton or something, appeared in the vestibule, mopping his brow.

"Come in, come right in, sah," he said graciously. "De Lawd is in His holy temple. Let de whole uth stand in awe of Him."

"Thank you," said Kit. "I just stopped a minute to hear the singing. I must be getting on."

"De blessing of Gawd Almighty go with you," said the other. Then, feeling that the time and place, as well as his official position, demanded further reference to Holy Writ, he added: "Every valley shall be exalted, sah; de crooked shall be made straight, and de rough places plain."

Kit shuffled on through the dead leaves and the heavy air, on which the song still floated like oil on stagnant water. It was all true. There *was* no mercy like His. The crooked straight, and the rough places plain;—eternal comfort, eternal hope. But where did that take him? Oh, better far to shut one's eyes, like those black people in there, and believe one was seeing than to wander with a hawk's gaze through impenetrable darkness!

The crooked straight. But how, O Lord, how? If one could only have a long talk about things with Jesus Christ—or Socrates or Marcus Aurelius or Abraham Lincoln, for that matter. There was something wrong with religion. You asked for guidance, and it, with copious protestations of infallibility, fed you a Trinity.

Well, there was Jack. He would confess failure and go to Jack. He would riposte with pleasantries on the trials of extreme wealth, in his puppy-like way; but press him far enough and he would respond. Yes, there was still Jack.

VI

And young Mr. Caslon, after the expected delays and persiflage, measured up to expectations. Late one night he sat on his bed in his underclothes, puffing a short black pipe, and heard Kit out.

"What about this proposition of your uncle's?" he asked on beginning to be serious. "This factory thing, up state somewhere?"

"That's out of the running. Always was, and more than ever now. I won't have anything to do with the conventional money-making occupation."

"I only wondered. A respectable family business like that is a blessing to a lot of men. They spend their working hours in it, feel they're earning a living and doing their share of the world's work, and work out their salvation on the side.—And it doesn't attract you as a mission? Family call, that sort of thing?"

"Not a bit. Uncle Jeff could sell out and move to Kamchatka to-morrow, for all me. Not but what I like them all well enough."

"I suppose he's hardly likely to do that," said Jack

ruminatively. "The Yankee temperament—the Nutmeg State. New England feudalism. Why doesn't somebody write it up properly? The analogies with medieval feudalism are beautiful—except that that was enlivened by an occasional Crusade. . . . Kit, do you see your uncle locking his wife up in tin and barging off to rescue somebody's tomb?"

Kit shouted with laughter at the thought of Aunt Ella thus protected. "Seriously—damn you—oh, poor Uncle Jeff! Would he take Elise along disguised as a page, do you think? . . . Be serious now, will you?"

"You're so serious yourself," said Jack; but his smile faded in a yawn. "I do like my legs," he said with sudden interest, stretching them out before him. "They're that wonderful shape, both knock-kneed and bowed. Like a Tartar's bow, kind of. They go, they go, swift as an arrow from a Tartar's bow . . ." Kit let this fall, knowing that it prefaced a return to the main subject. "Why then, seriously, New Kittle, I'm not much worried about you. There's nothing alarming in not having found one's life work at twenty-one. Lots of men in our class haven't yet. And the ones that have chosen—if all consideration of the main chance were eliminated, as it is in your case, how many do you think would be sure now? Not a quarter."

"That's so. Though it doesn't help me."

"Well, you've got a year still. And you can take another respectably. Go round the world, or get into the war. Go over next June and drive an ambulance. You might get interested in reconstruction work or something."

"Possibly. I'd thought of that."

"Or simply go into newspaper work, not as a permanency, but as a sort of waiting club. That brings you up against so many things that you'd be almost

sure to discover something. The world is so full of a number of things—"

"I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.—Are kings happy, I wonder? Why don't they ever say?"

"Are rich men happy?" asked Jack, eyeing him.

"They are not!—I don't know, though. I can't call myself unhappy, come to think of it. There's something in it, the possibilities . . . I wouldn't say rich men were necessarily unhappy, not unless they were born fools."

"Perhaps the same may be said of kings," said Jack, yawning. " 'Oh, polished perturbation! golden care!' See now—I'm sleepy, and you're not. That's because I'm the happy low lie down, and you're uneasy rests the head that wears a crown. Ha!—Go to bed, Nik Tewell, and don't let your gold chafe your spine. It's a good spine, at bottom.—Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't mean that, really! . . ."

VII

This was honest comfort, and enabled Kit to face senior year secure in the choice of war, journalism or travel at the end of it. But this was in the fall of 1916, so that senior year had no end, properly speaking. The first alternative, swelling into a preëmptive duty, cut it short.

Kit was as astonished as the majority of his countrymen. He had read books and heard lectures, but he had never contemplated war as an occupation. The days suddenly became feverish; they ached as they passed; the thought of action became the one hope of well-being. There was one evening in Woolsey Hall, a great peace meeting; a spectacled speaker care-

fully picking his wordy way over the susceptibilities of undergraduates who had come but to find fault. Then from the street outside, coming nearer and nearer, the sound of a brass band playing "The Stars and Stripes." Feet shuffling, students seizing their hats and scurrying out; then Kit scurrying with them, in torment till he was marching behind the band, his mouth wide open, yelling. It was in one; there was no gainsaying it.

The Campus became a medley of farewells. Kit himself chose easily; he enlisted in the Naval Reserve and waited only to be called out. Jack, less sure of himself, more deliberate, was equally hospitable to the general idea.

"I hate marching because I'm a Californian, and I hate the sea because I was sick once going to Santa Catalina Island, so I think I'll try the Air. Probably I can't pass the exams, but that's my first choice. I'm told that any boob can fly if his reactions are normal; also that it doesn't necessarily kill you."

"The idea darned near kills me," said Kit. "Our Intrepid Birdman!"

"It's a pretty picture, isn't it?" Jack was indifferent to "kidding" now. But there was a note of humility in his voice as he went on: "Though to be sure, even lowlier worms than I have sprouted wings. How doth the busy caterpillar . . . The Alembic of War. Gosh, how bored our grandchildren are going to be!"

Late in April Kit went down to the Yale boathouse, received a suit of blues which he wore only when on liberty, a suit of dungarees which he wore all the time except when washing it, and a general understanding that war was a game of pretending the boathouse was a ship. When out of it you were ashore, when on it you were aboard; floors became decks; objects were

located topside or inboard. Kit swore cheerfully among his comrades, not really minding it. Every few days he saw Jack, and together they screamed with laughter over things in general. War was simply another and sillier kind of peace, after all.

And then one warm May evening, when Kit with a twelve-hour liberty arrived to spend the night in Vanderbilt, Jack greeted him with a changed face. "It's all fixed up, Tew Nikell. I'm directed to report at a School of Military Aeronautics—whatever that may be—at Cornell. I'm leaving to-morrow, to become what Shakespeare so beautifully calls a courier of the air."

"Gee, that's great," said Kit, and then it was hard to say anything.

Their study faced northward, on the Campus. The quadrangle was nearly empty, but brightly lit as usual, and one might easily have looked at it without noticing anything uncustomary. The night breeze blew over it carelessly, unsentimentally. And yet as the two lolled over the window seat, the inner lights turned off, the conviction became present that there were an immense number of beings not far off, who knew and cared, intensely. Conscious and continuous life, such as this place had known for two centuries, could not vanish utterly from existence. Those of '61, those of '12 those of '76—they *must* be near, they *must* know . . .

"Well," said Jack, blowing a puff of smoke at Polaris, "this is an end, and there's something solemn about an end, even to people to whom life is mere biology. And we're not that kind. There's a great deal that might be said, but we won't say it. And after all, it's not necessary."

"No," said Kit.

"But there's one thing I guess I will say, just—well, so that you'll know I know. Whatever I've got out of this place—and it's been a lot—I've got from you. You've given me—oh, a hold on life, the strongest I've ever had, or am ever likely to have. That's that."

Kit's heart swelled; here was a beautiful thing, simply and beautifully done, without a trace of gush or sentimentality. "Thanks," he said, "but see here. Whatever I've done, I've done because I wanted to. And you've done more for me than I have for you, if the truth were known."

"Blah!" said Jack pleasantly.

"But it's true. I can't explain, or expect you to believe me, I suppose. But whatever I've put into this—friendship, I've got back, oh, so many times over—"

"Oh, Matthew Arnold." Jack's voice was bored.

"No! Infinitely more. It's as if— Do you ever have the sensation of coming face to face with an enormous abstract force—knowing it as well as if it was concrete, though it's still abstract? You spoke of a hold on life—that's the idea. Knowing you has been an illustration of that—no, not an illustration. Oh, I can't explain."

"I'm afraid you can't," said Jack dryly.

The Campus sent a little sigh of wind through the open windows. Perhaps it also had felt things, strange, primal things, that it could never explain.

VIII

The hot summer wore on; the harbor stank; the boathouse life became a drab routine, devoid of humor and purpose. Then in September things brightened:

he was sent to Pelham to take a course. A few weeks later he became a reserve ensign, a gentleman—nay, a very person again, after five months' obliteration as personnel. Even a certain amount of attention was paid to him; he was chosen among others to take a three months' course for a regular Navy commission at Annapolis.

In February he wore his uncircled star. Teeming with knowledge and dignity he went to New York for a fortnight's leave before receiving the orders that would finally take him into the war. At last, the real thing! Small craft or capital ship, that was the only question. He would welcome anything, but he dreamed of a destroyer and the wet cold air of the Irish Sea.

He stayed in his own house; the servants had been dismissed long ago, but old Nevins remained as caretaker. He lay in bed of mornings and wondered where the sun came from, as of old. To think where he was now—a naval officer, and in possession of his fortune. But the latter circumstance weighed on him no longer; he was not bothered by the frayed ends of his future. There was no future but the war.

He frequented the Yale Club, and saw several of his friends who dropped in, uniformed, on leave or on their way between places. Dick Hoffington, who was a captain of infantry at Upton, and Jen Cobb, on his way overseas with an artillery regiment, were among them. But the face he longed most to see was not there; Jack had in December gone to England to complete his training. Kit treasured his infrequent though fairly regular letters; they were like a rising barometer of vision and experience. First came the bewilderment at Cornell, then reflections from the bright air of Texas.

"New Kittle," he had written in October, "there's something in this flying. It gets you. You go up in the early morning a great deal, and you see effects of light and shadow and color and space to make the angels weep. Perhaps this is because it's a new thing to mankind; one feels a cosmic surprise. Then you return to barracks, and see nothing but selfishness, shiftlessness, petty lust and petty ambition such as you'd never believe existed. Is it like that in the Navy? I'm beginning to realize what an astonishingly *clean* place Yale was."

Then in January, from England: "Portmeadow, my boy, is near Oxford, and every time I go up—or out, even—I see the storied spires. They add a historical touch to the expanding scene. Do you realize that in the last few months I've traveled, lived among foreigners, joined the military and earned my living, all for the first time? To say nothing of flying, which means being in daily contact with death and with what I believe I dare call Absolute Beauty. You mustn't expect to find me quite the same when you see me again. On the other hand, don't expect to find me different. Particularly don't expect to find me noble. I can greet the dawn at 15,000 and play the army game all in one day, just as some fortunate persons can smoke a cigarette and spit at the same time . . ."

Jack had gone far, evidently.

He saw a great deal of Maud Hoffington during his leave. She was rather busy playing bridge for her country, but not in an objectionable way. Kit understood; she was no Joan of Arc, but neither would she ever prowl the streets with white feathers.

"I thought at first of doing something *real*," she explained to Kit once, "driving an ambulance, or nursing, but it's no good. I can't drive a car properly,

and I always faint at the sight of blood. So I just do two hours a day at the Y, and call it square. But it does give one an idea of the average woman's uselessness. If there was only some one thing that I did really well!—like that Mary Vane. You remember? She's played at our house several times. She's going all over the country getting up musical shows at the various camps, and playing to the soldiers. She's wonderful."

"God save me from 'wonderful' women," said Kit, and meant it. "Without being sentimental, Maud, I may say that you look all right to me. Dash it all, what's a woman *but* a woman? Any more than a man but a man?"

Maud flushed and looked pleased. She patted the star on Kit's sleeve and said it was dear of him.

They were in the Hoffingtons' library, with objects of art hemming them in on all sides. Not that Kit noticed these, but they had an effect on him, for all that. They gave remoteness, glamour and a sense of safety. Studying the pile of the immense Persian rug he said slowly:

"See here, Maudie. When I get back from wherever I'm going—what about our getting married?"

Maudie glanced at him and smiled, then stopped smiling and glanced down. "I don't know. I really don't know, Kit. I never thought of it. But . . ."

"Will you think of it, while I'm away? Perhaps my being away will make it easier."

"Oh, no. I love having you round."

"Better than any one else?"

"Yes," she said, nodding like a child.

"And I you." He leaned over and kissed her. "Think about it," he repeated. "There's no one that

can hold a candle to you, as far as I'm concerned. Never has been."

On the last night before going to get his orders, which he was to receive in New York, he took her to the theater. It was a French farce that he had chosen; he was not up on the current plays and merely remembered hearing this mentioned in the Yale Club as "good." It was all in the difference between readings of that word; in any case he should have known better. The first act passed in safety, but the second was too blatantly foul to be ignored. He sat staring at the stage with a hot face, feeling wrath at the French. After all, what was so screamingly funny about marriage?

When the lights went up he turned around. "I'm sorry, Maudie. I didn't realize it was like this. It's —it's too broad."

"Yes, it is," said Maud. Pink suffused all her shell color, and she pulled at the edges of the cloak on which she sat. "I don't like it. Would you mind taking me home, now?"

He got promptly up, not sorry. Maudie was perfectly right, and had done it unexceptionably. There were things to attend to, a taxi to be got, a message left for the Hoffingtons' chauffeur. Yet even as he spoke to the carriage man it flashed across the back of his mind that a certain kind of woman, disliking it equally, might have laughed. It would have shown . . . a certain strength.

In the taxi he apologized again. "That's all right," said Maudie, and immediately talked of something else. Kit suddenly and inconsecutively wondered why he had not thought of marrying Maudie now, before going away. There had been time. There still was, for that matter.

"Well, I'm not going to," he discovered. And then he could not help wondering if he ever would.

IX

The next morning he went down town to get his orders. They directed him to report for duty to the Commanding Officer of the Asiatic Fleet, Manila, P. I.

Part II

NUEI

CHAPTER V

I

THE excess of that rage Kit came presently to look back upon, with a mixture of amusement, as one of the most creditable emotions of his life. It was a clean honest thing, directed against no person or persons but merely against his bad luck. It was entirely unselfish in basis; the Atlantic service he had wanted would have been far less pleasant as well as more dangerous.

It burned hot and strong for a few weeks, and then died utterly. On the ship out he met two or three others in a like plight, and that made it easier. Then Honolulu, with its diving boys and brass bands and *leis* and blue mountains, flashed across his view in one long day, and after that he was too interested to think of anger. The past fell off him. The war and Maud Hoffington were almost as completely submerged as Park Avenue and Yale in the newness and largeness of the Pacific.

Manila, lying dry and hot in the April sun at the head of its vast shallow bay, hit him hard. What he had expected he was not quite sure; probably a thin veneer of Americans in white duck superimposed on a colorful crowd of savages. What he found was a mellow, world-weary, cosmopolite town about the size of Washington, with European-looking churches and American-looking office buildings, fashionable cafés and a turbulent history, run by a small, unsuspected and important race of Spanish or half-Spanish

people, the Filipinos. He immediately took boat to Cavite, talked with various bored warrant and junior officers and was told that his assignment orders would come "in a day or two." Knowing that this meant at least a week or two he mopped his dripping brow, went back to his hotel and began to look around. He shopped on the Escolta, strolled at eve on the Malecon and sight-saw in Intramuros, the old walled city. He presented letters of introduction in the new bright plaster districts of Ermita and Malate to Americans in business or government employ; dined there; heard for the first time about the Jones Act and learned that the Islands were, in a quite real manner of speaking, self-governing. He responded, as to something irresistibly new and important. His undergraduate imperviousness to the introduction of knowledge on new subjects fell from him, and he absorbed like a grown man.

"I like it," he informed himself. "I like the Chino shops and the musty churches and the department-store houses and the naked kids and the Filipino laborers with their funny peaked hats. But gee! I really believe I like my own country most of all I see here. It may be the idealism of youth, but really it would seem that we'd achieved something beneficial and unselfish. The benefits we get from the naval base and coaling stations and trade can't be said to outbalance what we've given in peace, health, education and prosperity, or what we've spent in men and cash to give these. If this is Imperialism, you can call me an Imperialist."

He took trips down the Bay, to los Baños, to Pagsanjan, to the Taal volcano, and wished he were free to go further afield, to the Mountain Province

or the Southern Islands, and see for himself the Moros, those Orangemen of the Philippines, to cut his way with a bolo through primeval jungle and shoot exotic animals. But it wasn't to be. Just as the monsoon rains broke and the heat became clammy he was assigned for duty to the *Nashua,* a superannuated cruiser of some 8,000 tons burden. Two days after he joined she steamed down the bay one night in the teeth of a hot wet wind, and Manila was a memory.

II

He had rather hoped to be sent on gunboat duty in China, to poke his nose a thousand miles up an ancient river and see at close quarters the most numerous of the world's families. But this would show him something equally interesting, and as naval duty it was better. If—and rumor had it that this was the case—there was a German raider alive in the Pacific, there was a chance of action. He wished this could be so, though the *Nashua* as a fighting proposition was not inspiring of confidence. She listed, she creaked in a dead calm; her eight-inch turret guns had the worn, thin, refined air of Colonial spoons. Wardroom gossip had it that they had not been boresighted since 1900.

Without any one's knowing, or caring much, where they were bound they rounded Mindanao and steamed eastward into the unnamed sea that lies between Micronesia on the north and Melanesia on the south. Kit was aware, through the reading he did on the side, that they were leaving one world for another, Malaysia for Polynesia, the world of Conrad for that

of Stevenson and Melville. Both were fascinating, and since neither was war it made little difference. Duties aside—and he found that for a normally intelligent person they could be largely aside—he felt as if he were traveling for pleasure on a blank ticket, destination unknown.

On and on they plowed, facing the sunrise, amid daily spouts of rain and the ubiquitous odor of the open sea, so different from the familiar "salt" air of tidal marshes and the same here as anywhere, except that it was always warm and always at the maximum of dampness. In the constant humidity clothes, even the lightest, continually clung to the flesh and promptly mildewed if left in lockers; metal corroded, matches refused to ignite and briar pipes exuded a loathly sweat. Kit did not care. Sometimes the clouds would break and the ship would lie between a sea and sky of the most uproarious and incredible blue. Flying-fishes shot in silver across the waves, dolphins and bonitas pursuing them on the surface. Sunsets and sunrises gorgeous beyond imagining marked the ends of the day. At night, if it was clear, strange stars appeared and the familiar ones about the North Pole sank from sight; the wake of the ship glowed so bright with phosphorus that it seemed to cast a shadow. Even the rain squalls that came lashing up from the southern quadrant were beautiful. This sea was an enchanted sea; the horizon was the meeting of curtains that waited only for a signal to part and reveal the blinding white of coral beaches, palm-cloaked mountains shooting into rocky spires across which languid vapors trailed, tinkling waterfalls, exuberant flora and stranger yet cousin peoples whose natures were instinct with the spirits of air and water and the silent, sun-dazed magic of the eternal South.

III

Nauru, where they first touched, came as something of a jolt. This was excusable, seeing that it was new not only to Kit but to the world. Here indeed were roaring reefs and fantastic coral shapes and glassy lagoons lying under brooding palms, but all this was tempered by wireless towers, electric lights, a European society and industrial activity. A German island, German for thirty years and an object of interest to its owners for hardly more than ten, a treasure of phosphates, the latest and most astonishing prize of the Pacific, it had been wrested from German control in the first year of the war by the British. The Germans had put up a strong and not ungallant resistance; they had, when the warship left, hauled down the Union Jack and packed the British garrison off to Ocean Island. Now the Germans were interned in Australia, and the British were quarrying and shipping their precious phosphates unhampered.

It was odd to see such a well-developed and obviously profitable business flourishing in the dreamy South. Chinese coolies cut the phosphate slabs in the quarries and carried them out on their backs; they were loaded on narrow-gauge tramways, carried to the shore and transferred to the steamers by the most primitive means. There was no harbor, and every thing and person coming on or off the island had to run the gauntlet of the eternal surf on the reef in open boats. These were manned by continually shouting Kanakas of sorts, some thin-nosed and yellowish, others brown and negro-looking. Kit loved to watch them; they were so boisterous, so cheery, so willing and, in the long run, so effective. And all the time on the green plateau above the Englishmen lived with

their families exactly as they might live on Wimbledon Common, entertaining each other at dinner, playing bridge and getting up Red Cross festivities.

Of all this he had only one short tantalizing glimpse, for they stayed less than thirty-six hours. He wanted to join the bridge parties in the neat coral houses in the neat coral-pathed gardens, to learn the Nauruan lingo, to talk with the Resident about Imperialism, that queer spontaneous game of Getting Together in odd corners of the world. But juniors did not do that sort of thing. Besides, the Captain was busy with the Resident. He had called, it was said in the wardroom, for coal. The accounts one heard of the interview were diverting; the most popular was that the Resident had said that there was no coal to spare, but he would wireless for a collier from Sydney, if desired. To which, it was reported, the Captain replied: "Oh no, don't bother; I just thought I might pick up some. I don't really need it, you know"; and the Resident riposted: "What did you think this was, Pittsburg?"—almost certainly fiction, but entertaining.

And it caused the junior officers, Kit with the rest, to turn questioning eyes on the Captain. He was a Commander by rank and Hubert C. Roth by name; a man in his early fifties with iron-colored hair, a taciturn disposition and a roving eye. It began to be wondered if he were "quite all there." They might or might not be pursuing a mythical German raider, and it was quite in order that junior officers should not know what was on foot; but the impression most of them got was that he was using the *Nashua* a good deal like a yacht. No one really knew him; no one knew if he were playing a little game with them or not; no one was quite sure that he was the man to

conduct whatever little game the ruling spirits of the Asiatic Fleet had in mind.

Kit, for one, never knew.

Instead of calling at Ocean Island for coal, as was generally expected, they sailed on southeastward. Intelligent juniors glanced at the chart and said "Samoa, of course—Pagopago." Some said Suva. It mattered not in the least what they said, either as regarded Captain Roth or the progress of the ship. Presently they veered east northeast, and the wardroom had it that they were going to Honolulu—to be scrapped, most likely. Kit did not mind. He liked Honolulu, and it would certainly be pleasanter to be scrapped neatly, in port, than by the wild sea waves.

IV

One morning he came on deck after a nap following a night watch and found they were at anchor in a glistening gray sea, with a bright permanent gleam a mile or so off the port bow. A reef. The possibility of target practice was suggested, but they had laid to, it appeared, in order to do something technical to the engines. Only the engineers understood and they were intentionally elusive about it. The morning was idled away. At noon Kit saw two of the senior officers vainly trying to make an observation through the cloud film.

At lunch the Captain—all the officers messed in the wardroom—announced that sounding parties would be sent out. Again target practice occurred to every one, soundings for a raft mooring. But, no; the Captain merely wanted to find out where they were. Cloudy weather had forced them to run on dead reckoning for a week past; they were near a reef, but it was

not clear which of two or three. Soundings, giving the configuration, would establish their whereabouts exactly.

The engineers, always aggressively blithe when the engines of the *Nashua* were under discussion, nosed to the top of the conversation. One of them said it was a fine thing to know where you were, especially if you weren't likely to leave there very soon. Another observed that it was the habit of the south sea islanders to plant a bit of scrap iron with their cocoanuts, for fertilizing purposes, and the supply was likely to be increased before long. The Captain flushed a dull red, turned his fishy eye on the junior and asked if he would like to run this show. The junior spluttered something into a glass of water, adding that he was sorry, sir. There was a pause while the chintz curtains in the portholes gave one flop in the ship's roll; then the Captain muttered:

"Too soon. Wait till you're fifty or so."

"What for?" inquired the executive, voicing general bepuzzlement. "Being sorry?"

"Yes. Or laughing at the Pacific Ocean."

No one had. All remained vaguely uncomfortable. Kit, trying to lighten the situation, ventured cheerfully: "I'm not laughing at it. I'm keen on it. It's as good as a war."

He was given the fishy blue eye and the words: *"As* good—huh! *That's* good!"

The meal ended in a nervous silence. No one knew what he meant. Kit never knew.

V

Two sounding parties were sent out in motor dories. Their orders were to start close in to the surf on

the reef and work north and south, respectively, sounding every two hundred feet or so for a mile to two miles and at the same time try to ascertain the width of the reef. Kit was placed in command of the dory ordered northward. Two seamen in dungarees got in with him, and off they chugged.

There was a smooth swell running under a colorless but brilliant sheet of clouds. One of the seamen, Jones by name, a blond, gawky, pimply youth, became sick and stayed sick, the color of the sky, but less luminous. Kit ventured a word of humorous condolence, which fell flat. Jones was too sick for humor, and Masson, the other, a swart, heavy-browed creature, ignored everything except the engine.

They reached the appointed place, shut off the engine and began casting the lead. Masson took the oars and rowed between casting places; Kit handled the lead and made the notations as well, Jones being useless for the day. Kit was quickly absorbed in his work, casting and noting: two fathoms, three and a half fathoms, five, seven, five and a half, eight, ten, nine. The reef was slowly sinking in a direction north by west. He could fairly feel it under his feet, the restless polyps swarming at their task.

The line showed nineteen fathoms. "It's one bell," said Masson.

Kit looked up. The sky was dull gray all over; a dark gloomy afternoon. An hour and a half before sunset; he said as much, adding that they were hardly more than a mile from their starting point. Jones looked at the smokeless stacks of the *Nashua,* more than two miles distant, and sighed.

A gob of rain fell on Kit's cheek. He glanced up quickly. "Sort of dark in the southwest. What's the time, Masson? My watch is on the blink."

"Five-eighteen."

"I'd like to finish this up properly. Three more, and we'll call it a day."

He felt the lead strike for the third time. "All right, Masson, put her about and start up. What's the time?"

"Five thirty-seven."

He noticed that Masson did not say "sir." A sullen, untractable type. "Sort of late. Don't want to take chances with this tropical twilight. We're all right, though."

The engine was slow in starting, and Kit began rowing to gain headway. He glanced at the southwest; it was pot-black. There was a dead calm; a few drops of rain fell tinkling on the water, and made gray splotches on his white blouse. A faint awful moan became audible in the southern quadrant, slowly rising. After a few minutes the engine started, with loud irritated snorts.

The southwest had swelled incredibly, blotting out half the horizon as if with black smoke. "Gosh," said Kit, "we're in for something. Give her the gas, Masson," and he started rowing again.

A minute later it was on them. Kit took off his blouse and stowed it in the tool box, to keep some things in the pockets dry, but almost before he could get it in it was drenched. Then came the wind, screaming, scraping the swells into wrinkles like those on an old man's face, then blotting them out in a cross chop. White crescents of foam flared up.

"We must be getting near," said Kit, raising his voice over the din. "What was our course?"

"About one-ten."

"I'll steer. Give me the compass."

He took his seat in the stern, tiller in right hand,

compass in left. The wind had risen to a continuous roar; the waves from the southwest had piled up so that it was impossible to keep the dory from yawing. He wondered how much she had yawed while Masson had the tiller, after the horizon was lost.

Six o'clock; it was almost totally black. The storm —it was not a squall but a steady rising gale—filled the world. A horrible sickness, not seasickness, but something a thousand times worse, gnawed at Kit's stomach. His temples throbbed beneath his dripping hair. His cap was drenched; he threw it off.

"We must be about there. See anything, Masson?"

"Not a thing."

"She'd have all her lights burning by now."

"Sure."

He steered left. There was no use in going further in the original direction; they would pass the cruiser hopelessly. Ten minutes he bore twenty degrees, the wind helping. Then he dared go no further and steered dead astern. Twenty minutes, in the teeth of the gale, up and down the hissing waves; half an hour; forty minutes. He could not bear to stop. No light anywhere; only the green phosphorus on Masson's wrist watch, and on the hideous waves.

"We've lost her," he said, and shut off the gas.

"It'll lift," said Masson. We'll be able to see."

It did not lift. Adrift—he was afraid to use more gasoline, with some vague idea of needing it more later—they ran with the gale. By turns he and Masson took the oars, to keep the dory's head in the wind. The waves rose slowly under them; the dory would poise on their heads for an appreciable time and then sink slowly into the trough.

Jones, the silent member of the crew, was sick no longer, but became articulate. Above the roar of the

gale they could hear him moaning as he sat huddled in the bow. "Oh, God . . . my God, we're lost. . . . Oh, Jesus Christ . . ."

"Shut up!" said Masson with a snarl.

Kit felt for him, and for Jones as well. "Jones," he said, "it's all right. They'll send out for us. They'll know we've got to go with the wind, and follow us. All we've got to do is to sit tight. Cheer up, now."

He was glad he said it. He certainly felt better for it, and he thought the two others did. Jones uttered no more words, but continued sniveling and moaning, uncontrollably. Darkness, emptiness; wet wind roaring and roaring; stinging rain; huge seas sending the dory up and down, slapping jets of cool spray into it. And somewhere amid these furies of wind and water were electric lights, dry bunks, chintz curtains and safety.

VI

At ten-thirty or so the rain let up, though the gale continued. Every time they reached the crest of a wave Masson and Kit would stand up, peering in opposite directions. Nothing. Every time, nothing.

He reasoned. The gale must have taken them far to the northeast of the cruiser, and she, with one boiler or more still empty, might be incapable of moving. He told Masson to start the engine again and try to work up wind. But that proved impossible, in the sea that was running now. They must lay to, or be swamped.

He made researches into the equipment of the dory; found a water cask nearly full and a few ship's biscuit, wet and probably wormy. When the rain started in

again, which it did about midnight, he drank from the water cask and made the others do the same; then he arranged his blouse over the hole in such a way that the rain drained into it. He had with him a cake of Swiss chocolate, warm and semi-fluid, which he had taken to munch for pleasure. He issued a ration of this of about a square inch.

Jones remained prostrated, incapable of holding his head up. Kit and Masson took turns through the night, hour on, hour off, keeping the dory headed and sleeping. Kit did sleep, in jerks, feverishly, crouched on the floor slats. Once, after many hours, when he rose to take his place at the oars, it occurred to him that the white splotch in the bow that had been Jones was gone. He glanced wildly around; there was only one other white area, Masson, crouched in the stern.

So Jones had come to it. When would they?

When he next waked Masson it was light. Masson did not seem to notice the empty bow. Neither mentioned it.

Dawn deepened into day, gray and merciless. The sea was still high, but the gale was falling. Occasionally a ray of sunlight would pierce the clouds and inflame a speck of roving water with gold. Every few hours came a spurt of rain. No sail, no steam, no land, however often they stood up and looked; nothing but sky and sea. By noon it became unnecessary to head the boat any longer, and they let her drift, half hoping she would capsize in each trough. She never did. The two sat at opposite ends of the boat, Kit generally leaning against the bow seat staring at Masson; Masson sitting in the stern with his hand on the tiller, staring from under his heavy brows at the horizon.

Kit gave some sporadic attention to Masson. He

was a coarse, sullen, stupid type, neither attractive nor distinguished in any way. Kit had noticed him on the cruiser, and disliked his manner. And yet now he was behaving well. Probably he was one of that race whom prosperity makes idle and predatory, but the pinch of need or the prick of danger renders respectable, even strong. On the *Nashua,* doubtless, there was no dirt he would be unwilling to do an officer, if he could safely; but here Kit trusted him. It never occurred to him (as it did afterward) that he had perhaps assisted Jones overboard.

They said very little. The empty sea said it all. They presently stepped an oar in the engine and tied Kit's undershirt to it, as a signal. There was no one, there would be no one, to notice a fleck of permanent white amid the swarm of changing ones, but it was a thing to be done.

One thing, just one, was in their favor: they had water. It was the rainy season, and they could catch all the water they needed to drink daily—all they absolutely *needed.* But what did that mean? Only delay. Was a month or six weeks of this better than a few days?

Yes—thirst was the worst torture. They were spared that.

The day died in a sunset of needless and cruel splendor. The first cycle of twenty-four hours was completed; how many more? Oh, God, how many?

Night, vast and somber. Sleep, merciful, relieving, though broken by dreams, showers and sudden wakings. Dawn, blatantly and brutally cheerful.

The sea was quite calm now, only ruffled by a steady southeast trade. Kit, who never in his life had gone without his three square meals a day, began to grow light-headed; by afternoon he was afraid of what he

might say if he spoke, so shut up completely. He would half forget and think about other things—direct fire control, Jack, or where the petrels nested; but the fear and fever were always near, always ready to burst into the full sting of consciousness. Slow torture, acute in nothing, unbearable in everything. He was not suffering in body. He was not consumed by anger, or by remorse, or even the fear of death, though he shuddered as he thought of what Jones had done. The bad part of it was the constant wondering what it would be like a week, two, three weeks hence. . . .

The third night was rainy, and whenever he woke up Kit drank voluptuously from the cask. The next day saw the end of the chocolate; Masson ate his last bit without comment. Only four ship's biscuits and a few scraps remained now. Kit wondered if Masson would kill him to get his share.

As he lay down under the rowers' thwarts on the fourth evening he felt feverish as in the early stages of grippe. He was unable to go to sleep, and could not forget his aching head, his yawning stomach, the floor slats eating into his flesh. Scraps of conversation, scenes out of the past, phrases from books vibrated in his brain. Captain Roth's dull red face and dead blue eyes: "*As* good—that's good; *as* good, that's good"—intolerable. A sudden scream of laughter he had once heard in a theater; he had at first thought it was a scream of terror and had visions of a panic. Jack, sprawling on the window seat, swinging one leg and twirling a curtain cord: "New Kittle, Nit Kewell, Kew Tinnel, Tin Wekell, Tew Nikell . . ." Oh, Jack! All at once he burned and ached to do what he had never done or wanted to do; hug Jack in his arms, and kiss him. If only Jack were here

it would be so easy; they would joke till the last minute and then drink death hand in hand. What was that thing Jack had said once?—Oh, yes, Matthew Arnold:

> Creep into the narrow bed,
> Creep, and let no more be said—

Ah, that was it, sweet and sensible, like Jack. And then

> Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
> Let the victors, when they come,
> When the forts of folly fall—

Oh, his body would be by the wall. He would never do what Jones did—(God, never let him do what Jones did)—he would dry up on the bottom of the boat and the sea birds would peck at his eyes.

> Those are pearls that were his eyes . . .

He listened to the water slapping gently on the dory's sides as she swung up and down the swells. The motion was rhythmical, like a song, a sort of cradle song. *Poor little Kit Newell, asleep on the waves, going to die, going to die so soon. Poor little Kit Newell, wanted to live, going to die, going to die so—*

He woke with a start, feeling rain on his face. He got up and fumbled round in the dark; drank a little from the bailing tin and arranged his coat over the hole in the water cask. The rain rang on the swells; the wind was light but steady; where from? Southeast, most likely. What time? Couldn't see

Masson's watch; no matter. Masson was asleep. Was Masson going through all this too? God, how much longer? How many nights, how many days?

He lay down again in the rain, stripped to the waist. The rain stopped, and one star came out and blinked at him. It wasn't so bad now; he didn't know why, but it wasn't so bad. He closed his eyes.

When the forts of folly fall. Oh, merciful Jesus, make it short. Christ, who loved all men, in the name of that love look down and intervene! Death, yes; life, yes; only not this, not this. Not—madness. The Ancient Mariner—*The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she*—God, not that! He had killed no living thing, hated no living thing—not that! Christ would be merciful. Christ loved him, as He loved all men, and would not forget. Tears sprang from his eyes and ran, ran and ran down his cheeks, warm. He didn't care. The narrow bed. The forts of folly. Oh, Jack, we never thought of this . . .

CHAPTER VI

I

WHEN he woke the dawn was yellow in front of him, and to the left of the dawn, low and black and unmistakable, was land.

There was no question of its being a cloud; not for a moment did he think it was a cloud. He stood up, rubbed his eyes and felt his heart sing in him. "Masson!" he cried, stooping over and pulling the sailor's leg. "Wake up! Land in sight! Land!"

He put on his blouse, buttoning it with fumbling fingers, and sank down. "The forts of folly have fallen!" he said with a gasp of laughter. "Huh?" said Masson, cranking.

After many attempts the engine whirred off, and its voice was the voice of sweetness and safety. And now they were glad they had saved their gasoline, for they were two or three miles off shore and in their weakened condition it would have been hard to row that distance. Kit turned about on the front rower's thwart, feasting his eyes on the unspeakable sight. The sun came up, flooding the world with pale clean gold, revealing the green of the ragged line of palms, the white of the beaches below them, the tumbling white of the reef below that. What it meant!

"My God, I'm happy!" his mind proclaimed. "Whatever happens later, I've known it. I've been happy once."

He saw a break in the land, with a break in the surf nearly in front of it, and told Masson to make

for that. "Looks like an island," said Masson—his first purely conversational venture since he had entered the dory.

"Yes," said Kit. "Well, it means we shan't starve, anyway. We may be eaten, of course." It was delightful to say something at once disagreeable and untrue.

The break in the surf was broad and safe; they passed through it and the strait and entered what Kit knew must be a lagoon. The land on the right was longer and higher than that on the left, and he directed Masson toward it. By straining his eyes he presently made out some brown roofs gathered into a village. Nearer they sped, the put-putting of the motor ringing harshly over the quiet water. He could see figures on the beach, knee-deep in the water; also a short white line jutting out, evidently a small pier.

The last two hundred yards were the longest of all. He scanned the faces and figures; every one of them was brown. Few were more than half clothed. "Shut her off," he said, and the dory glided up to the little pier.

He jumped out. A brown figure took the painter from his hand and bent to make it fast. With Masson close behind him he walked slowly up the pier and stood on the beach facing the crowd, all laughing, all excited, all jabbering in jerks. "Well, my good people," he said, doffing his hat with a wave, "we're here!"

There was a burst of laughter and words, but no further advance. "And now," said Kit, "does any one here speak English?"

"Ingalees!" repeated many, with vigorous nods of the head. "Ingalees!" But no one went any further.

"Tabake!" said some one, as Kit wondered why

they were so backward. He understood that, and took out his tobacco pouch, toward which a score of hands were instantly reached. "Wait a bit!" he said, laughing. "It's all I've got, you know!"

(And how true that was, he thought, how fantastically true!)

He gave several people a pinch and put away his pouch, and then a boy, a bright-eyed child of perhaps fourteen, became conspicuous. He kept pulling at Kit's sleeve and uttering some unintelligible speech that sounded live a travesty of English. Kit caught the word "kaikai," and remembered reading somewhere that that meant food. "Yes, kaikai!" he cried. "Go ahead, my boy! Kaikai by all means, and lots of it!"

The boy ran off among the houses that clustered under the slanting palms and in a moment came back bearing some objects wrapped in green leaves. This was food; Kit and Masson sat down where they were and fell to. Some one else brought green cocoanuts, cleverly knocking off the tops; the liquid within was nearly tasteless but deliciously fresh. The food was nearly tasteless, as it was colorless, but it was food. They ate it all, with the exception of some bits of dried fish. Kit after his first bite politely placed it on the sand by him; Masson, after his, ejaculated the name of the Deity and sent it spinning over the heads of the crowd, who laughed.

The boy sat close by Kit, fascinated, ever ready with food and incomprehensible speech. "Moa?" he kept saying, thrusting forward his colorless bits of kaikai. "Moa?" Kit laughed and tousled his smooth black hair. English! How beautifully everything was turning out!

A man about fifty, with a mustache and scraggy

beard, sat with his hand on the boy's shoulder, and discoursed. Kit distinguished some words apparently meant to be "Small fella" and "Belong me," and gathered that he was the child's parent. There was also something about "Long way too muts," presently followed by "Samoa."

"Hear that, Masson?" said Kit, pricking up his ears. "We must be in Samoa. Lord knows how we ever got there, but I guess we have. We'll have to go and find the boss.—I want to see the governor," he told the native. "Governor, you know—chief, big man. White man, Ingalees!" The other seemed unconvinced, but he rose and pointed inland.

Kit also got up, stretched himself and just happened to glance toward the dory. He saw a number of natives in and about it, poking all over it. "Wait a minute," he said. "Here, you, get out of that! U. S. Government property, you know." He drove them back, locked the tool box and put the key in his pocket.

They then followed the elderly man, attended by almost the entire population of the village. They walked through a settlement of thatched houses built on piles on gray gravelly soil under waving palm trees. It smelt periodically of damp sand, flowers, cooking and pigs. After a walk of perhaps three hundred yards they came within sight of the sea again, and their guide turned to the left and led them into the gate of a wooden stockade. They found themselves in an enclosure about three hundred feet square with some native huts scattered about in it and, at the further side, toward the sea, a one-story building of concrete.

Toward this they all walked. Kit was preparing a speech: "Sorry to disturb you so early in the morning,

Mr. Governor, but . . ." The door was open; he walked up the steps and into a damp, dark, cockroachy hall. A door at the right was ajar; he entered it and found a long bare room with a desk or two and some dilapidated chairs, plainly an office, in spite of its dirty and uncared-for appearance.

"But there's no one here," he said. "What's the meaning of this?"

He went across the hall and into two smaller rooms, both disordered like the other. There were beds in them, with the remains of some bedclothes strewn about, dark and mildewed, disgusting.

"But I don't understand—have they eaten the governor? I suppose there must be another office somewhere, and they've given up this one."

"Uh-huh," said Masson, uninterested.

Kit went back to the office room. Its windows looked out over the stockade and through a narrow fringe of palms to the sea. Half a mile or so out, from one side of the view to the other, extended the white barrier reef, almost unbroken. The southeast breeze blew pleasantly through the unsashed windows. The place had evidently been chosen for its prospect and coolness, and, all in all, it was not a bad place to live and work in. Why should it have been given up?

He turned from a window, and his eye fell on a large map of the south Pacific hanging on the opposite wall. It was the most conspicuous object in the room, and he idly strolled up to it. All at once his eye, as it roamed over it, fell on two printed words: "Fidschi-Inseln." His heart quickened; his eye sprang to other names: Karolinen-Inseln, Australien, Neu-Zeeland—he knew that language. He understood.

"Good God, Masson!" he gasped, feeling his knees give under him. "It's all up! We're on a German island!"

II

But there were no Germans in sight. After wandering around, feverishly chattering with the Samoa man and the boy, he made it out; the Germans had gone. Simply gone. "Him fella he go out along boatee," the man said repeatedly, and others nodded vigorously and pointed seaward. Not toward the lagoon, but seaward. Yes, that was all very well, but was no one there to take their places? Hadn't the English come? Hadn't there been a fight? Were there no white men on the island?

No. And this wasn't Samoa; he had been mistaken about that. The man was merely a Samoan living here. He escorted Kit to the map and after a prolonged search laid his finger on a little point on it, darkened by the prints of other fingers. Idiot! He might have noticed that before. A tiny dotted line, perhaps a sixteenth of an inch long, and by it the words "Nairawa-I."

Nairava; the German W betokened a V sound. A small forgotten strand, abandoned by its owners, worthless to every one. Well, it was better than they should have expected, no doubt. Better than the open sea, which stood on tiptoe, pawing at them, on the barrier reef. The sea had laughed, and flung them from the oblivion of death to the oblivion of desertion. The roar of its surf was a long-drawn, raucous cachinnation.

"Well," he said, "let's get this place cleaned up."

III

It was immediately understood that Kit and Masson, as the only white men in sight, should occupy the only white man's house on the island—the *Residenz,* as Kit dubbed it. The natives enthusiastically helped them get it ready. They brought brooms and swept, they took away refuse, they brought clean native mats and laid them about invitingly. This work was shrilly superintended by the boy, who by this time had fairly adopted the strangers. He announced his intention of bringing them food regularly, also of coming to live with them, the better to gratify their lightest wish. "Me stop along you fella," was the way he put it, his speech much hampered by imperfect command over the consonants. His name, it transpired, was Etera. ("Etcetera," Kit preferred it.) His father was known as Aitaki. It was not till much later that Kit discovered these to be versions of Ezra and Isaac.

By noon the place was in tolerable order. The natives mostly dribbled away. Etera brought them food and cocoanuts, partook of them himself and then composed himself for slumber in the hall. Kit decided to do the same; he lay down on the clean mats spread on the springs of one of the beds and slept for three hours.

When he woke he saw faces peering in at the door. Two of them belonged to girls, not pretty, but almost; one of them wore white flowers in her hair. Kit gave an involuntary spring toward his uniform; he was in his underclothes, and his underclothes for the moment consisted of drawers, he having left his shirt in the dory. The girls laughed, and he sank back on the bed. There must be no foolishness about modesty.

He was as well clothed as any of the native men he had seen.

He dressed and, followed by the girls, went into the other room, where Masson had retired. He discovered him sitting on his bed, clad only in his trousers, his arm about the waist of a native girl, leering. "Oh, Lord, so we're in for that sort of thing," muttered Kit, turning on his heel.

He called Etera and went forth on a walk of exploration. He told himself he was looking for other white men's dwellings, but was not deceived. He inspected the lagoon; it seemed to be several miles long, narrowing considerably at the northern end. The opposite, or western, side of the surrounding atoll was lower and thinner than the one he was on; it was a mere string of palm-fringed islets connected by stretches of bare coral sand. With a detached interest he noted the colors of the lagoon in the sunlight, its hues of amethyst, sapphire and emerald—as useless to him, under these conditions, as the jewels themselves would be.

Returning to the coral path which stretched up and down the middle of the island, they walked northward for perhaps two miles. They passed through one or two tiny villages; people came out and stared at them, fat brown women with babies at the breast, men, mostly corpulent if over thirty, old crones with absurd leathery breasts, small children sucking their fingers, mother-naked. Very few wore anything above the waist; one or two of the women wore old and bedraggled *holokus,* long-sleeved wrappers reaching to their ankles; but the vast majority wore either the plaited waist-mat or the cincture of pandanus straw strung from a cord—the *be* or the *rivi.* All were curious, good-tempered, garrulous and incomprehen-

sible. All had a strange oily smell and all were interested in tabake.

At length they came to a point of land; open water surged between them and the next tongue of white coral. Kit could see the northern point of the atoll curving away out to sea in a reef punctuated by a few small islets bearing wind-beaten palms. And at the end of that, eight or ten miles distant, a swell of land, much higher than that on which he stood; another island.

"Why, of course!" he cried when he saw it. "I understand—that's the main show over there! It's not just one island, it's two or three, perhaps a whole bunch! They're over there—whoever they are. Hi, Etera! See, over there, Germans? Deutsch over there, Germans, Ingalees, yes? White men?"

Etera shook his head, and was volubly sure, in his obscure *bêche-de-mer,* that no one lived on the island who would interest Kit. "No fella white man," he kept repeating, omitting or perverting most of the consonants. "He no stop. He walk away, along boateee."

"I'll go over there and take a look, all the same," said Kit.

They were overtaken by a shower on the way back, and took shelter under what Etera called a *maniaba* in one of the small villages. This was simply a rectangular thatched roof sweeping nearly to the ground from a height of perhaps thirty feet, in an arresting and pleasing outline. Kit had seen a larger one in the main village. It was apparently used as a council hall and plaza, a place both to convene and lounge in. Some people were dozing in it now. Kit sat down on the earthen floor and watched the rain beat down outside. He noted certain fauna; crabs; one

tree-climbing variety of a bright pure blue. Hardly the color for a crab. There were also rats, reddish, and smaller than American ones, and somewhat less unattractive. A few chickens strolled about, mangy and dispirited-looking fowl, mostly cocks.

He also noticed rain water tanks, bowls carved from tree trunks placed under particularly large palms, with a leader of a cocoanut frond deftly fixed so as to divert the water from tree to tub. He reflected that he had drunk no water since landing, only cocoanut juice. Yet there must be fresh water; he had seen one or two muddy pools.

They reached the Residenz at sundown. Etera brought supper, also a lamp consisting of a cocoanut shell filled with cocoanut oil, and a wick of some informal fibrous material. Kit was interested to see the boy make fire with a fire drill; but the lamp when lit gave a poor light and stank to heaven. Also there was nothing to stay up for, and soon after Etera had installed himself on his mat in the hall Kit retired to his own hard but clean couch. Of Masson there was nothing to be seen.

IV

The next morning he devoted to study. There were a few books in the Residenz, all mildewed and written in German, but priceless. (It was then that he gave thanks for the ministrations of Fräulein Rock.) There was a little paper-bound German-Nairavese dictionary, worth its weight in diamonds, and two or three Colonial Office pamphlets. From these latter, and from the information he picked up as the result of familiarity with the language, he was able to learn something about the island and its history.

Nairava lies at the southern end of an isolated reef rising out of the vast waste of water between, roughly speaking, Hawaii and the Gilberts. It is small, as coral atolls go, measuring only a little over four miles in its longest direction. Many atolls measure thirty. The Gilberts are about as near as any inhabited group, and it appears that from them the first Nairavans came. Some southwest storm threw them, in their long outrigger canoes, on its strand with the same casual gesture that it had thrown Kit. There are traces, linguistic and otherwise, of additions from races further south, but the language and physique are preponderantly Micronesian. In Nairava and its sister island Tenguiu the castaways settled and throve, and probably no friend who saw them depart ever learned of their survival.

Lying far from all the main trade routes, and offering no particular advantages for trade or colonization, these islands remained long unknown to the world, and when known, disregarded. Cook visited them on his last voyage and described the inhabitants as "neither intelligent nor tractable." For nearly a century they remained neglected, damned by that phrase, visited only by the rarest whalers and traders. But these last inevitably taught the natives how to make copra, and at last the great house of Godeffroy, of Hamburg, established an agency there.

That was in the early 'eighties, and it was not till twenty years later that the German government thought it worth while to take formal possession. What attracted them, of course, was the hill of Tenguiu, reminiscent of the phosphate-bearing ones of Nauru and Ocean Island. They took over the islands first and investigated afterward, and it turned out a bad bet. There were no phosphates on Tenguiu, no

coal, no iron, no gold or anything but basalt slowly crumbling beneath a lush tropic vegetation. Still, it was another red dot on the map for Germany.

So they kept the islands, and established a resident in addition to the Godeffroy agent. The receipts for copra, the one exportable produce, were hardly sufficient (5,400 marks in 1912) to defray their salaries, but Empire was Empire. The seat of government was established on Nairava. This was a reversal of the native arrangement, under which Nairava had always been at least nominally tributary to the kings of Tenguiu. The latter island, however, was not a good place for white men. It had plenty of fresh water and a fertile soil, but also quantities of flies, mosquitoes and other disease-bearing insects, and no harbor. Nairava had little soil and less water, but it had a good roadstead, few mosquitoes and a climate as healthful and agreeable as that of any coral atoll.

For eleven years the Resident and the agent had lived here, supreme. There had been no other white men on the islands, not a missionary, not even a servant. A Lutheran missionary had christianized the place in one feverish half-year and then, as was the custom in the obscurer islands, installed a Samoan pastor over the flock, the man Aitaki. Fortunately for the islanders, the tempers of the two white men were tolerably good, for their rule was essentially the rule of the Lüger. They summarily shot those who irritated them, but left the others, with their land and their laws and their customs, alone. They also prevented traffic in liquor, and kept the natives from quarreling too much among themselves. The Resident sat in his concrete office, dispensed a casual justice in legal affairs, and drank rum. The trader sat in his own little compound near by, distributed cheap

printed calico, fish-hooks and tobacco in return for copra, and drank rum. In the evening they would meet in one or the other of their houses, play cards, drink rum and generally part with their hands on their holsters; but the next evening would find them together again.

It was in Kit, when he learned something of the life of these two, to feel a certain sympathy for them. Not only were they alone, as isolated as himself and Masson, but they were responsible for order. Order is a thing the Micronesian has little desire for, and the white men must have lived in the perpetual knowledge that it was, in the last instance, a matter of two Lügers against a whole population.

But from the moment the war came, Kit ceased to pity them. It seems that they knew nothing of it for nearly a year; the semi-annual copra boat simply did not arrive. Doubtless they guessed, doubtless they cursed the vaunted German Navy; at all events, when in June, 1915, a Dutch barque put into the lagoon, they packed up and left. They were not going to wait and be captured by Japanese or "schweinfleisch Engländer"; a safe passage home, via Java and Rotterdam, for them. They were the last Germans to remain free in the Pacific, as it was.

But it would have been glorious to stay. Kit did not see what he could possibly have done, in their places, but stay. The enemy might never come, and if they did, it was all in the day's work. An arming of the natives, a brave hopeless fight, or at least some honorable resistance; at the very worst a splendid death for King and country. No, they were quitters, those two, quitters pure and simple. But he thanked the Providence that had made them so.

V

As he sat reading Masson lounged in and slumped into a chair. He wore his dungarees, which were filthy; he had a six-day beard on his face (he was no worse than Kit in that respect); his hair was unbrushed and contained bits of vegetable matter. He also, according to his own announcement, had a head.

"Nigger hooch," he explained. "God, what stuff!"

"Who gave it to you?" inquired Kit.

"Sadie, and her gang."

"Sadie?"

"My girl. Call her that 'cause I can't say her damned name. Yep, they passed round the old coco shells, filled with That Stuff. You'd oughta try it. They was all singin' and dancin', and in about five minutes I was too, with the best of 'em. Cripes! I don't know where I slep', except that Sadie was there. . . . Lord, I'd give a million dollars for a Camel." He spat on the floor, uninterested in life.

Kit eyed him, without favor. "Don't spit in here, Masson. We've got to live here. And you'd better see about washing those dungarees."

Masson swung his head sideways and looked at him hatefully from under his heavy brows, but said nothing. Presently he spat again.

"Don't do that," said Kit. "You can spit in your own room, if you like."

"Oh, all right!" He got up and lumbered to the door, then turned quickly, scowling. "See here, what's the idea of this?"

"What's what idea?"

"Oh, this orderin' round. Hell, one of us is as good as another here, ain't he?"

"I wasn't ordering you round," said Kit, lowering his book. "I was telling you not to spit in the sitting room, exactly as I'd tell any one not to, if he did."

"Oh, all right," growled Masson, turning again.

"Wait a minute. We may as well get this straight, while we're about it. As you say, we're equals as long as we're on this island. We can forget the Navy. On the other hand, we're not going to forget common decency. I shall treat you exactly as I'd treat any one else under these conditions, and I expect you to treat me the same way."

"Then what to hell's the idea of your ordering me round like you did now—yes, you did, order! Hey?"

Kit smiled, and wiggled one foot. "I'm sorry if I seemed to order you. I only meant it as a suggestion. I'm going to wash my clothes, and I advise you to do the same."

Masson paused. He spat once more, but at the last moment directed the missile into the hallway. "Sadie'll do it," he said, and went out.

After lunch, punctually extracted by Etera from nowhere (or more exactly, from the maternal cookhouse), Masson's temper and head improved. "Say," he vouchsafed, after some vain expressions of desire for a cigarette, "there's a war on this island. Or has been. The niggers is quite het up about it."

"War?" said Kit, interested. "Who with?"

"Why, there's another island near here somewheres. They hate these fellas. They come over and burn their houses."

"Why do they hate them?"

"Search me. There's a guy called Kak—something, was tellin' me about it. He speaks English, almost. Say, ain't it hell the way they talk English on a German island?"

Kit agreed, having wondered about it himself. "Well, what did Kak say?"

"He ast me what I thought you'd think about it. I says, 'Go and ask him.' You see, they think we may be of some use to 'em. I don't know; as far's I can make out there's some German guns and ammunition somewhere round, hidden. They think it would be nice if we could lead 'em to it, and help 'em shoot them other guys up."

"Oh, gosh, I don't want a fight. Why can't they leave each other alone?"

"Search me. They're a wild gang. Well, guess I'll turn in for a bit. Too damned hot to do anything. If Sadie comes, tell her to wait till I wake up, will you?"

Kit sat in the silent heat of the noon hour, thinking hard. Behind the Residenz, in a corner of the stockade, he had noticed what Masson probably had not, a smaller stockade surrounding a little erection of concrete. This was shaped like a stair entrance into a cellar, and had an iron door fastened with two padlocks on hasps. He had examined these latter; they were intact, but bore marks as of pounding with heavy stones. This must be the arsenal; the natives knew it and had tried to get in, but failed. A file would have done the trick for them. Then there must be no file on the island.

Yes, there was, just one. In the tool box of the dory.

He rose and tiptoed out, with one glance at the snoring Masson. He inspected the arsenal entrance, and found it exactly as he had last seen it. He walked on through the blinding heat, out of the stockade, through the village, to the lagoon landing.

It was a foolish hope, no doubt. The Micronesians

are notoriously thieving and inquisitive, and they would almost certainly have broken open the tool box, if they had not abstracted the file before he locked it. But he found the box intact, and on opening it discovered all the tools there. Including the file.

He put it in his pocket, relocked the box and walked back, his eyes on the ground. He was fully aware of the immense importance of that file. Whoever held it, held the reins of Power in these two islands. A bit of steel, seven inches long.

At the door of the Residenz he stopped and looked quickly about. No one in sight except Etera, asleep in the hallway; no sound but the rustle of surf and the hot breath of noon in the palm fronds. He lowered his eyes and scraped the ground with his foot. It was light and sandy, gray, with a shading of brown from rotted vegetation. He went to the least frequented side of the Residenz, noted a particularly large coral block in the foundation and just under this dug a hole a few inches deep, using the file itself. At the bottom of this he placed the file, scraped the earth over it and stamped it down. He then went to his own room, took off his clothes and slept.

VI

On regaining consciousness he decided that the first thing to do was to see this man Kak. And as he lay on his bed, searching in his dictionary for such words as "gun," "cartridge" and "shoot," Kak himself came in.

His real name was Kakaiwia, and he was a splendid specimen of South Sea masculinity at about twenty-five. He was muscular, tall and not yet corpulent.

His face was beardless and rather coarse-featured; from time to time it lit up with a naïve and attractive smile. His position, as Kit presently discovered, was an anomalous one. He was the son of a king, or head chief, of Nairava who had died before the Germans left. In the ordinary course of things Kak would have succeeded him, but there was a difficulty, the old one of the bar sinister. His mother, a lady of noble family from a neighboring village, had been guilty of an indiscretion. The king had killed the offender and restored the erring spouse to his bed and board; but marriage is a serious matter in Micronesia and it had been made perfectly clear to all concerned that the issue of her liaison would have no hereditary rights in the family. Still, he grew up in it, and as he was the only male member of it some people thought he might as well become king when his stepfather died. Others did not, and Kakaiwia remained a king and no king, a born leader but not born a leader.

His mission was one of peace; he came to offer the formal friendship obtaining between men in the South Seas. He brought presents: mats, cocoanuts, fishing materials and, dearer than all, a few yards of dirty but serviceable mosquito netting. Kit, touched, gave him his pipe and tobacco, feeling sure that the friendship of this man was cheap at the price of a few days' smoking.

They discoursed chiefly in Nairavese, as Kit could actually by this time say more in that than any islander in *bêche-de-mer*. (German, he had found, was spoken by no one, except in a few isolated words.) The visitor smiled at Kit's frequent consultations of his dictionary, but he complimented him on his quick progress. The Germans, he said, had taken months to

learn as much. In five minutes they were talking contemporary politics.

The Tenguians, to whom the islanders referred always as the *uakana* (those men there), the Nairavans themselves being *uakai* (these men here), were prompted by the not unnatural desire to restore Nairava to its former state of vassalage. They were the more numerous, and they had the advantage of unity under a recognized sovereign. The Nairavans were disunited as to leadership and were further divided, though unequally, between the two sides of the atoll. The western, less populous side was known as Naituvi, the other being Nairava proper. It was Naituvi, it seemed, that caused most of the trouble; Nairava if left to itself would probably have recognized Kak as king long ago. Every effort had been made to win them over; but they were apparently a highly moral people, and in any matter involving the Sanctity of the Home they were adamant. And the *uakana* burned and pillaged on both sides of the atoll whenever the fancy seized them, all but unresisted.

Kak, it was clear, chafed under these depredations, and was soon talking excitedly about how easy it would all be if they could get at the guns the Germans had left in that little cellar near by. Kit was not surprised at this, but he was surprised on learning Kak's notion of what a foreigner could do about it. His reasoning was that white men had made the arsenal, filled it, guarded it, used it and opened it at will. One white man, he supposed, could as easily do this as another. The nature of a padlock was unknown to him, and he had thought that Kit could simply open the iron door with a wave of his hand.

Kit informed him of his mistake, and saw his face fall in disappointment. Perhaps it was chiefly pity

that made him add: "Even so, I can get into that place. I won't tell you how, but I can."

Kak's jaw dropped, his face lit up like a child's and he began imploring Kit to do it, then, and quickly. Kit was of course not to be persuaded; he was not going to open that Pandora's box of troubles unless it proved necessary. To prevent the murder and extinction of the Nairavans, yes; but that was absurd. Behold! the *uakana* had done their worst for years, and the *uakai* still lived and flourished. But he suggested that the threat might be of some use in bringing the Naituvians under Kak's leadership.

Kak shook his head vigorously and mournfully. "They will never call me king," he said.

And then his great idea struck him. His face grew radiant again, and he began babbling like a brook in flood, with a strong imploring note. Kit tried to make him stop and repeat it more slowly, but the man's excitement overcame him and every time he would rush on again as though talking in a race. Kit lay back on his bed, laughing.

Then Etera, squatting unnoticed in the doorway, made his contribution. In a voice as eager as Kak's, and containing a suggestion of protest against Kit's mirth, he announced: "He speak, he make you fella belong keeng."

Kit stopped laughing. He felt his face grow foolishly red. There was a pause; then he recovered himself, and made gestures. It was very nice of Kak to suggest his being king, but really, it would hardly do. He'd make an awful mess of it. He wasn't used to such things. Why, in his country he wasn't even a chief. It was better for a people to be ruled by one of its own number. Besides, the Nairavans, let alone the Naituvians, would never hear of it.

He dismissed the thought as he would have dismissed the suggestion that he might become President of the United States. But even as he talked one consideration, a quite serious one, did occur to him. As a responsible ruler he would be able to use the arsenal and its threat with an effectiveness impossible to him acting merely as a shipwrecked visitor. Then it flashed across him that perhaps this didn't matter so much, either; that the substance of power was his already, in his ability to open the arsenal. A disturbing thought. He made no mention of it, naturally.

Kak was arguing at a great rate about how the whole atoll, Naituvi and Nairava alike, would obey a white king. There had never been any difficulty about their obeying the Germans. And a united atoll, backed by the arms in the arsenal, could simply wipe Tenguiu off the map; etcetera. Kit hardly listened to him. He said "No!" with various inflections of firmness and lightness, and went on to ask more about Tenguiu.

Kak, disgruntled and indifferent, allowed that though peaceable visits between the islands were rare, there was likely to be one from the *uakana* before long. There were spies everywhere, and they would have heard by now of the white men's arrival. They would sail over, bring presents, take a look at the newcomers and find out how the land lay.

"And I'll tell them," said Kak uncontrollably, "that the white men have shown us how to get at the guns, and next time they come over we'll shoot them all dead!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Kit, smiling. "They'd kill me at sight, if you did that. And I want to get to know the *uakana*. I want to go over and

see their island, and make friends with them, if possible."

"Not with them, not with those dogs, Nuei." (This was the version the islanders, imperfectly acquainted with the letter L, had made of Newell. Masson, similarly, was known as Máttoni.)

"The dog," Kit wanted to say, "is man's best friend." But his ignorance of the language interfered, and the apothegm was not impressive. Kak, after some further desultory conversation, departed.

VII

Kit's mood changed. The sense of busy-ness and life which Kak's presence had given now abandoned him. He forgot the arsenal and the war and Kak's strange proposition, and knew only that he was alone on a desert island, with very little hope of ever getting off. The future was a sour thought in his brain, the present a dream from which he yearned to wake.

He walked idly down to the ocean beach. It was sunset, and the eastern clouds were radiant with a uniform pink, the rich luminous nameless pink found only in sunsets. The southeast trade barely breathed in the sensitive palm fronds overhead; barely, for once, murmured the reef that broke with a long gash of white the encrimsoned waters. He drew a deep breath and stared over them, toward home. A crab scuttled down the sand, a tern bleated; from the land came a faint tuneless singing.

The sand, that in the noon burned through heavy shoe soles, was now smooth and cool under his bare feet. He poked them down into it till he stood ankle-deep. Sand. It gave one some notion of infinity A grain of sand on the beach of eternity; that was

a man's life. Just as distinct, just as representative; just as unconsidered. Who minded the destiny of one grain of sand?

The pink in front of him vanished, leaving cloud-streaks of cold blue-gray. The sea gave a gleam of wicked steel and retreated into the gloom. A crab scuttled; a tern bleated; out of the suddenly withdrawn spaces of the heavens, soft and opaque and colorless, sprang the stars.

CHAPTER VII

I

NEXT morning, as he wandered about the palm groves with his dictionary in one hand and his eyes raised to the palm fronds in the general style of little Johnny Head-in-Air, he came on one of the muddy pools he had noticed before. By the side of it squatted Masson, entirely naked, and a native girl (Sadie, no doubt) was washing his clothes in the filthy water. Kit reddened and started to walk away; then turned again.

"Masson, look here! That's no place to wash clothes."

"Ain't it?" said Masson.

"No, and I'll tell you why. Have you noticed how many of the natives have got skin diseases? It's awful. And they wash their clothes in that pool all the time, and themselves too. I've seen them do it. You'll get that disease yourself if you wash your clothes there."

"Hell of a lot I care," growled Masson.

"You'll care when you begin to itch. Do you see that scum on the water there? That's the dry skin they scrape off themselves . . . God, I don't see how you can do it!"

He started to move away, but the sudden scorn in his voice roused Masson. "It's better'n not washing 'em at all, I guess. I notice you ain't washed your things yet. Naw, and there was a lot o' talk about how you was goin' to, yesterday afternoon." He

winked at Sadie, who giggled; it was the most odious kind of showing off.

"Shut up!" said Kit, in spite of himself.

"Ho!" pursued Masson. "That's equality, ain't it? I can't go any place on this island without you come along and tell me to shut up, eh?"

"I didn't, till you asked for it. Masson, can't you ever behave decently?"

"Decent, huh! If you think it's decent to come follerin' round after me and my girl, and me naked, huh! Yeah, *Mister* Newell, there ain't a gob in the Navy don't know enough to keep off of a guy when he's got his girl along. Decency! Christ!"

This time Kit simply walked away. He went to the ocean side of the island and washed his uniform as well as he could. It was nasty and sticky afterward, but even that was better than ringworm and yaws. It was also better than being less clean than Masson.

Masson was going to be a problem and a pest, clearly. There was nothing to be said for him; he was a bad lot. And in the dory he had been really quite fine. Why did people have to be like that?

II

On the following morning Etera, bubbling with high spirits, informed him that there was to be an entertainment in his and Masson's honor in the evening —a sort of song and dance affair, as far as Kit could make out. Etera added that his father disapproved, which, however, would probably not prevent him from attending. All the morning the village reeked of food; every cook-house had a group of women and children squatting about it. Later the whole popula-

tion, seemingly, gathered in the *maniaba* for some sort of a rehearsal. Kit could hear them carrying on from a distance: a queer sort of rhythmical chanting and thumping. Well, it was nice to be popular.

At five or so Kak called at the Residenz and escorted them in state to an almost flat section of the lagoon beach. All Nairava was there, and all Naituvi, decked with wreaths and necklaces of flowers. Limbs and bodies were lustrous with cocoanut oil; every one wore an excited and festive air. A great circle was formed, on the edge of which Kit and Masson were installed on chairs brought from the Residenz. The natives squatted on the sand, Nairava on their right, Naituvi on their left. This was to be a competitive affair, it seemed. Liquor was circulated in old cocoanut shells, a sweet and evidently heady draught. This was the famous *mang-ing,* the fermented juice of the cocoanut flower; to taste it was to forget trouble.

The party, the *ruoio,* as it was called, began. Without apparent reason, without even obeying any observable signal, an old woman in the fronk rank set up a sort of wail, beating her two hands on her breast in rhythm. Others took up the burden, clapping their hands on their persons, on the ground, together. Suddenly a man sprang into the center of the circle, gesturing and posing, singing something that was almost what the chorus sang, but not quite, in a close, elusive harmony. Another joined him; they sang alternately, together, broadening the rhythm, quickening it. Presently a woman entered the ring and sang, at first alone and slowly, then with growing passion, the men joining in. The three, followed precisely by the chorus, pressed to a climax; the music and the hand-beats grew faster and faster, maddeningly fast; the whole crowd was at last yelling, though

always musically, at full voice, making a volcano of sound in the jeweled sunset. Then, in the wink of an eyelid, the whole thing stopped, fell dead.

"God!" breathed Kit in the silence. There was no other word of appreciation for the beauty, the measured madness of it. He applauded lustily. The islanders seemed pleased.

Another dance followed, this time by Naituvi. Two more succeeded, and then came an interval for refreshment. The circle broke up and a stream of people came up to Kit offering food: fresh fish baked in leaves; cocoanut kernel cooked in various ways; chunks of turtle meat; shellfish; the leg of a brawny fowl, obviously male; an egg rather the worse for wear, raw and unbroken; succulent pieces of roast pork; the pathetic form of a little wood dove, sweet and crisp, and more and ever more *mang-ing*. Of this last Kit partook but sparingly; it was chiefly a matter of raising the cup to his lips and pretending to drink. He was far too interested to have any desire to get drunk. With Masson quite otherwise; he drank deep and often, and had soon pushed his chair away and sprawled on the sand. Kit presently did the same, though for a different reason.

The sun set in dove-gray and fire, and torches of dry oiled palm fronds were lit and held outside the crowd by boys. A bonfire was kindled on the lee side of the circle. Presently the people returned to their seats, their eyes and teeth and flowers gleaming richly in the ruddy light. Above them, beyond infection from firelight, the stars shot their virginal white rays. Down the lagoon, southwestward, the Cross and the twin flames of the Centaur burst out and quickly fell. Landward, over the black palms, the moon rose and

rinsed the lagoon in silver. And the *ruoio* began again.

It was obvious to Kit that this was no mere war- and love-dance of savages; it was an art, highly developed and obeying certain definite canons. The most extraordinary thing about it was that it attained so much richness and variety by the sole use of the voice and hands; no instruments were used. It seemed to stand about midway between opera and ballet in character. Rhythm was the dominant factor, harmony being present but subordinate. The communal sense of time and tune was astounding. Never did a hand miss a beat by the fraction of a second; never did a voice depart from the exact pitch; never did either hand or voice mar the bewildering suddenness of the finish.

There was one tale enacted of two heroes, represented by Kakaiwia and another man. They were twins, and they excelled all other men in sport and war, equally. One saw them spearing fish, fighting sharks, slaughtering enemies. Presently the inevitable happened; they quarreled over a woman. The tribe gathered to see them fight for her in a duel which the aged parents strove in vain to avert. The two embraced, kissed, then parted and fought. The populace, partial to neither, watched them, fascinated, chanting a measure marvelously suggestive both of admiration and grief. When at last they both fell, killed by the blow that only the other could give, the chorus went mad with despair, and the bride hurled herself on their interlocked bodies in suicidal frenzy. When Kak returned to his place his face was streaming with tears.

After a number of alternating acts the two sides

of the atoll abandoned their competitive efforts and joined together. Suddenly Kit's heart bounded; he realized that he was seeing enacted the story of his own landfall on that island.

"Two men alone in a little boat! Two men alone in a little boat!" chanted the chorus, as two swarthy natives squatting in the middle portrayed their idea of the sensations of shipwreck, hunger and thirst. Days pass, no land, no sail. They have no food, they have no water. They resign themselves to death; they commend their souls to the great spirit of the deep. And then—land! And so on: their landing, their welcome, food and drink and entertainment given them by the friendly people. "We love Nuei and Mattoni!" shouted the enthusiastic hosts. "Long may they live with us, in peace and brotherhood!"

Kit lay on one elbow, half seeing, half hearing in a sort of super-consciousness. Now for the first time since he had landed he ceased feeling astray and bewildered. He felt at home. He felt alive and happy—in a new and intoxicating sense. The magic of the South, that mysterious, hitherto withheld thing, was on him at last. It meant, now that he knew it, ease and safety and warmth, yes, but something much more than those. It glowed with human affection; it hinted of stars and the open sea and great soft darknesses; it was instinct with the flame of life and the calmness of death. It stood sponsor to man for the irresistible forces of the universe. "Look on me!" it rippled in its waters, sang in its music, sighed in its winds; "look on me, pale prisoner of a man-made world, and know what sanctity, what beauty and what peace the Power who made you intended! Regret nothing; remember nothing; only look, and know! Listen, and know! Dream, and know!"

Oh yes, he would look, listen and dream. There was nothing else; there was no true life but in surrender to this divine and final sense. To strive, worry, despair, feel lost—foolish, foolish. Nothing was ever lost. To accept what came, to smile at everything, to return at last to that dim place whence one first issued—that was all. . . .

III

As he lay dreaming in the quickening music a strange thing happened. With a shout Kakaiwia suddenly rose and leaped into the arena. "Nuei shall be our king!" he bellowed, picking up the rhythm of the dance. "He will fight for us against the *uakana!* Nuei shall be our king! He will lead us against the *uakana!*" The solo actors stood mute and dumbfounded; most of the chorus stopped singing and beating, though enough continued to maintain the rhythm. Gradually face after face lit up, hands moved again, voices took up the refrain. The soloists responded; in a moment the whole crowd was shouting lustily: "Nuei shall be our king! He will lead us against the *uakana!*"

Kit sat up quickly, very angry, glancing toward Masson. But Masson was too far gone in *mang-ing* to know what was going on, or care. But Kak, he was the villain, the traitor! Oh, he would give it to Kak, later! In an agony of embarrassment he looked around the circle of firelit faces. Few were on him; they were nearly all fixed on Kakaiwia. An illogical irritation pricked him; if they wanted him to be king they might at least look at him. . . .

Slowly Kit sank back on his elbow. The dance rose to its climax and fell into deafening silence; the per-

spiring Kak returned to his place. Kit did not bother to look at him; it was still Kak's move. Kak might be drunk, they might all be drunk; Kit knew somehow that it did not matter. This was a real move, a *coup d'état*. These people would think the same in the gray light of to-morrow as in the fire and music and passion of to-night.

The word Kak had used was *uvea*. Kit knew that; it was rendered in his dictionary simply as "König." It meant only one thing—a magnificent thing. A Thing To Be Done. Opportunity. Would he use it?

Of course. The *ruoio* went on, but Kit scarcely heeded it. He was alive again—or still? The Magic was there, but as a background, an illuminating radiance. Something To Do. Well, if it actually came to him he would do his utmost, God helping him. Leadership. Power. Responsibility.

The *ruoio* ended at last and the circle broke up. Kit was heavy with dreaming and *mang-ing;* he was dazed and sleepy; but he knew as he got up that he, who had sat down there little Kit Newell, lost on a desert island, arose chosen and acclaimed King of Nairava.

IV

The physical scene was actual enough. He noted certain details; a naked child a-straddle over a fat woman's shoulder, dead with sleep; a boy who had drunk too much being sick; the curious effect of firelight on the under side of palm leaves. He strolled down to the water's edge, watched the Naituvians embark in their canoes and gave a good-night to them. He returned up the beach to find the Nairavans not

yet dispersed, standing about in groups, talking. He knew what they were talking about.

He forgot them in the presence of a disgusting sight. The islanders, with a very few exceptions, were sober, though elated. Not so Masson. He lay where he had lain all the evening, drunkenly grasping at the person of a native girl, grunting obscenely at her. The girl seemed willing to suffer his embraces, but was prevented by Sadie, who kept pulling her away, vituperating, her wreath of white flowers awry over one ear. Presently Masson, roused by their voices and the laughter of the crowd, half rose, gave a lunge at Sadie that knocked her flat and a grasp at the other girl that caught only at her *rivi*. This gave way, unwound and fell, leaving her naked and screaming before the populace. Masson made another lunge at her, pulled her down and rolled over on the ground with her. Sadie sat nursing a bruised elbow, bellowing.

All this took only the space of time necessary for Kit to walk ten yards. He strode up and gave Masson a vigorous kick behind. "Get up!" he ordered. "Let go of that girl."

Masson let go and hunched himself up, snarling. The two girls stared dumbly. A dead silence fell on the crowd. Kit took an empty cocoanut shell, filled it in the lagoon and dashed the water in Masson's face. The sailor spluttered, swore, coughed, asked what t'hell . . .

"Get up. Pull yourself together," said Kit.

"Say," said Masson in a foolish plaintive squeak, "I guess I got a right—"

"You've no right to make a—" Kit's speech became unquotable from there on. It was the kind of language that Masson was thoroughly familiar with.

At the end he heaved himself to his feet and staggered off somewhere, alone. Kit went on to bed.

V

The next afternoon Kak appeared at the Residenz in company with four aged and important chiefs, and quite simply asked Kit if he would be King of Nairava. He also hinted that it might be a good thing if he opened that arsenal quickly.

There was little Magic about it. The details of the office, the moldy walls, the battered furniture, the faces of the chiefs, with their wrinkled and frequently diseased skin, stood out sharp and clear in the light of three p. m. Yes, he would accept, since it was their desire, and do his best. But one thing: he would not open that arsenal till it became absolutely necessary. He wasn't going into this thing for the pleasure of killing. Was that understood?

With regretful nods the elders assented. It was too bad. They had all seen his cavalier treatment of Masson the night before, and it had finally convinced them that this man was a real man. If he could do that to a white and an equal, what could he not do to Tenguiu, given firearms? However, if he thought he could prevail without these, let him try.

Itibwi, the oldest and most vocal of the chiefs, a little wizened toothless dotard with the complexion of a nutmeg grater, made a long, eloquent and incredibly dull speech of final agreement. Before he had finished it Etera came in to say that a canoeful of Tenguians was about to land. Kit suspected the crafty Kakaiwia of having seen them enter the north end of the lagoon, and hurrying the deputation to him first.

They walked impressively down to the lagoon beach, Kit in the middle, and found a group of perhaps twenty Tenguians standing about, armed, but only with rather comic-opera-looking spears. They were indistinguishable in appearance and speech from the Nairavans; they had the same general physique, the same occasional inclination to slant eyes and yellowish skins, the same guttural inflections of voice. In the middle of the group stood a short, stocky man of perhaps fifty, whose jolly pot-belly and snub nose contrasted curiously with an alert and crafty look about the eyes. Him Kak indicated to Kit.

"This is Ongong, King of Tenguiu. Ongong, this foreigner is King of Nairava. His name is Nuei."

The visitors raised their right hands, palm outward, in a form of salutation which the Germans had made current. "We greet you, Nuei, King of Nairava," said Ongong pleasantly enough. "I, Ongong, King of Tenguiu, greet you as a friend and brother." He offered his hand, European-fashion. Kit shook it.

They repaired to the *maniaba,* squatted about in a circle, and talked. Oh, how they talked! The strangers offered presents; bonita hooks, fish lines, even, most priceless of all, a hatchet, rusty but serviceable. "Are we going to give them anything in return?" Kit inquired in a whisper of Kakaiwia. "Not now," came the cautious answer; "wait."

Kit made a halting but politely received speech. He said that in accepting office he was prompted chiefly by a desire to maintain peace between the islands. This foolish warfare, which had no ground in necessity or justice, must stop. Perhaps in the old days Nairava had been subject to Tenguiu; they must forget that. Henceforth the two peoples would be equals, and friends. Moreover, he not only desired this con-

dition; he had the power to bring it about. He was able to open the arsenal; he did not wish to do so, but he would, on the first unprovoked hostility from Tenguiu. Let them remember this before they broke the peace again.

The assembly nodded and grunted amicably. Green cocoanuts were passed around. Ongong made a long, eloquent and incredibly dull speech expressive of his desire for peace. If his own tastes counted for anything, there would be a perfect millennium of good will. How these people loved to talk!—and worse than that, they did not seem to mind listening.

Kit himself caught the infection and rose to his feet again. It was perhaps as well to indicate further the conditions of his kingship, to Nairava as well as Tenguiu. His office was merely temporary. Sooner or later these islands were going to be reclaimed by some foreign power. When that happened, he would resign in their favor, and leave. England or the United States, even Japan, would give the natives a far better government and greater prosperity than ever he could, or the Germans had.

Once more the assembly nodded, plainly liking it. More talk ensued, in the course of which Ongong expressed a desire to pay his respects to the other white man. Some boys poked their heads over the circle to say they knew just where he was. They were allowed to summon him.

He came in, dragging his feet, rubbing his eyes. The Nairavans, remembering last night, barely suppressed their smiles; the *uakana* regarded him with polite interest. "What t'hell's this?" he mooed.

Kit in a few words told him what had happened. On taking it in, Masson threw back his head and gave a short rasping laugh, the first Kit had ever heard from

him. "Haw, haw! That's a good one, that is!" He looked at Kit, laughed again, shoved his hands into his pockets, uttered two or three synonyms for Divine Providence and stalked out.

The Tenguians embarked, with copious expressions of eternal friendship, inviting the white men to come and pay them a friendly visit. Kit accepted. He called a meeting of the Council of Nairava for the following morning, and walked quickly to the Residenz.

VI

He took pencil and paper—fortunately the Germans had left a fairly plentiful supply of stationery—and prepared his first state document.

I, Christopher Newell, of New York City, Ensign, U. S. N., having, in company with George Masson, 1st Class Seaman, U. S. N., been cast ashore on the island of Nairava from the U. S. S. *Nashua* on June 2, 1918;

And having been kindly entreated by the natives of Nairava (therewith and hereinafter as named being included the island of Naituvi and all other isles and islets pertaining to the atoll of Nairava);

And having been asked by said natives, at their unaided instance, to assume the office of King over them, in the absence of the Germans, their former rulers, and in default of the representatives of any other foreign government and their claims;

I, therefore, by this act accept this said office of King, and undertake with it the following obligations:

1. To recognize and uphold the sovereignty of the Nairavan people;

2. To conduct the government, comprising the executive, legislative and judicial functions thereof, to the best of my ability;

3. To strive to maintain peace, but if war arrive, to conduct the forces under me in the interest of the Nairavan people;

4. To endeavor to make my rule one of justice and order, and to conduct it by constitutional methods whenever such are feasible;

5. To resign my office to the representatives of any foreign government whose assumption of rule or protection over Nairava may be acceptable to the people of Nairava and myself.

These things I solemnly swear to uphold and perform, according to the best of my ability; so help me God.

"Jack would hate this," he said as he read it over, grinning.

He reserved a place for the signatures of the chiefs comprising the Council. When he came to affix his own signature he hesitated. He had been about to write "Christopher Newell," but was that quite the thing? Kings had other ways of signing. In most European countries, he was aware, they signed their first names, followed by R (for Rex), also, if appropriate, I (for Imperator). In Spain, he vaguely remembered, the sovereign put no name, simply "I the King," "Io el Rey." There was a certain grandeur about that. It didn't matter which king. If a king had signed, that was enough; the rest was a mere matter of chirography.

Oh, he wasn't fooling himself, he wasn't thinking of himself as on a par with the sovereigns of Europe. But either he was going to be a king or he wasn't going to be a king. It would be best to decide which, right now. Nairava was sovereign; that might be thanks only to its obscurity and the indifference of the great powers; but for the time being it was sovereign. And its people had unmistakably asked him

to be its king. The voice of the people was the voice of God . . .

He sat back in his chair, rubbing his eyes. Memories of Sophomore English floated into his brain, incredibly remote, yet strangely near.

> Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles,
> And ride in triumph through Persepolis?

Ho, there would be no riding in triumph for him. As soon as any one in the outer world knew he was a king he would stop being one and hurry back to the Navy lest he be called a common deserter.

> To be a king is half to be a god . . .

He threw back his head and laughed. The thing was a joke; there was no point in being too serious about it. Still laughing, yet with a strange stirring in him, he took up his pencil—there was no ink on the island—and at the bottom of his document wrote

CHRISTOPHER R

VII

The meeting of the Council—"the old men," as Kak called them, took place without untoward incident. The body consisted, according to local custom, of the head men of the several villages, of which there were four on Nairava and two on Naituvi. Kit was surprised to find the gathering so small, and later increased it to about twenty by including in it the adult male relatives of the chiefs.

His first act was to appoint Kakaiwia sub-chief of the island under him, to perform various assigned

duties and to take his place in case of absence or death. This was quite constitutional, as it was allowable to appoint as sub-chief any man of noble birth, and Kak's mother had been a noblewoman. Not even the Naituvians, those Catos of their race, could plausibly object to the arrangement. Kakaiwia himself was moved to tears.

With astonishing unanimity, and quite contrary to Kit's own beliefs, the council persisted in regarding the Tenguians as enemies. The old men averred that the *uakana* would be peaceful only when whipped, and again begged Kit to open the arsenal. By doing so he would merely save time; he would have to in the end anyway. Of course Kit did not consent; time enough when the *uakana* had shown active hostility. He pointed out the moral strength contained in the policy of giving a man enough rope to hang himself; but the beauty of this was unapparent to the islanders, and Kit wondered if indeed they were not morally superior to it.

VIII

That same afternoon came the inevitable scene with Masson. "What do I get out of this?" he opened, lumbering into the office while Kit was reading.

"What you put into it, I expect," was what Kit wanted to say, but he forbore. One must be kind. "What do you want?" he asked instead, as amicably as he could.

"I want something, that's a cinch," said Masson, slumping into a chair. "You needn't think . . ."

"What needn't I think?"

Masson turned his swollen squinting eyes on him. "You said something about us each being as good as

the other as long as we was on this island. Well?"

"Masson," said Kit, trying hard not to hate him, "would you like to be king in my place?"

"Sure I would."

"And you think you'd make a better one than I.—Well, possibly you would. But the decison about that rests with the natives, and if they'd thought you'd make a better one they'd have asked you."

"Huh, they'd have asked me, p'raps, if I'd gone out for it."

"Do you mean to imply that I went out for it? You're talking nonsense."

Masson closed his mouth and turned away. "What do I get out of this?"

It was not an easy question to answer, especially as he so plainly deserved nothing. "Well, Masson, you've a right to ask that, but it's hard to say. It's hard to say what I'm getting out of it, beyond what I had before. About all a man needs, or can use, in this place is a house and food. Oh, and women."

Masson gave one of his rare ugly smiles. "*More'n* you need, heh?"

"Oh," said Kit easily, though he felt his cheeks grow hot, "I don't pretend to be better than you in that respect. Of course, if we stay here any length of time, I'll . . . there'll be women."

Masson with a ludicrously satirical inflection uttered the single word "Queens."

"Yes, queens, to be sure. Well, now about you. How would you like to be commander-in-chief of the army? I'd thought of organizing a squad or two of the young fellows. Might be useful against the Tenguians. You could teach 'em to drill, and all that."

"Naw," said Masson promptly. "Too much like work."

"Oh. I shall probably do it myself, in any case. Well, can you think of anything?"

Masson stared at the floor for a moment. "About these guns the niggers talked about. You ain't got any notion, have you? . . ."

"Why, yes, they're in that place behind here. That cellar door effect."

"Ain't there no way we could get at 'em?"

"Certainly. The file in the dory."

"Huh? What's that?" Masson for the first time was moved. "Where is it?"

"Oh, I've taken it out. I did that the first day. That's the chief reason they made me king, I dare say."

"Well, ain't you going to trot it out?" Masson's tone was shrill and aggrieved.

"Of course not. Let loose a bunch of armed savages? Not much."

"Well, see here. This is the hell of a thing. You mean you've *hidden* it?"

"Yes, just that."

The sailor relapsed into silence, chewing his nails. He *was* stupid, thought Kit. Never to have thought of the cellar door, or the file, till he was told, and wanting to open the Pandora's box for the sheer love of trouble. And if he had done his duty as a seaman, and locked the tool box before leaving the dory, he might be king of the island at this moment.

Masson opened his mouth. "I want that file."

"Do you?" said Kit, smiling.

Masson swung round quickly. "You asked me what I wanted, didn't you? Well, I want that."

"You can't have it."

Masson hesitated a moment and then began to use a loud and blustering tone. "Look a-here now,

Newell. You handed me a lot o' bull the other day about us bein' free and equal and all that. Well, I got a right to know where that file is. I got as much right as you to it, see? And by God . . ."

"Yes," said Kit, "by God?"

"I'm goin' to, by God. Yes, and I will, too."

There was a short, dry pause. "Masson," said Kit, "you haven't got much brains. Don't you see that if we opened that place it would do us harm and not good? It would simply arm the natives against us, put 'em out of our control. As long as we've got the threat of opening it, we've got them where we want them. But once it was opened, and the least little thing happened, what show would we two have—"

"It wouldn't *be* we two," snorted Masson.

Kit got up and swung himself across the room. "Masson, you're the kind that likes trouble. You'll get it, good and plenty, if you keep on like this. You fool! Don't you know it would be the easiest thing in the world for me to open that place some night, take out a gun and shoot you? Or I could get a native to do it. No one would ever know, in any case. By God, I'll do it, too, if you go on trying to make trouble here. I'm not going to let you stand in the way of peace on this island. You may as well get this straight, Masson: I intend to be king over you as well as the rest of the island. I've got a hard job as it is, and I'm damned if I let you make it any harder."

He was talking hard, and from the heart. Masson sat staring at the floor, impressed in spite of himself. Kit swung round on him again.

"And don't you think you can make it any better for yourself by killing me, either. You can, of course,

any time. You could do it now, with your bare hands, I don't doubt. But you'd get found out. You're too much of a fool to do it safely. There'd be a court-martial the minute you got back. . . . And it wouldn't get you the file either, would it? And just how well do you think you'd get on alone with the natives? They're a pretty straight bunch, and they haven't got much use for a man whose whole idea is drink, women and trouble. You'd go a little too far some night, and it would be all up with you, I can tell you, unless I was here."

That was about all he had to say. He took a turn around the room, allowed a longer pause and came to a stop directly in front of Masson. He tried to make his tone friendly but not too ingratiating. "Now then, that's that. But you mustn't think I'm against you, as long as you behave yourself. After all, we've been through something together. . . . I want to see you contented here, of course. I won't stand any nonsense, but I'll do anything I can for you. Anything that's not calculated to make trouble. If anything occurs to you, speak up. I'll try and think, too.—Will you shake hands?"

Masson stood up and leered with some approach to dignity. "I'll shake hands with you when you come across. I ain't goin' to shake hands with no guy that says one thing and does another." He went out, hitching his trousers.

IX

The man was ugly, ill-tempered and trouble-loving, but he was also excessively stupid and lazy. Left alone he would probably have sulked and contented himself with strong drink and women until a ship

came or until the natives, irritated beyond endurance, quietly put him out of the way. It was the Tenguians who worked his ruin. Either the Tenguians or Masson alone Kit could have dealt with; but the two together were too much for him. They gave him an exceedingly uncomfortable fortnight.

The Tenguians began it. A few days after the coronation council they made one of their senseless nocturnal raids on Naituvi. The casualties were slight, as they were in all these encounters: a *maniaba* burnt and two virgins abducted into captivity. But it made the Naituvians and even the Nairavans very angry, and Kit quite enough so to satisfy both.

He was hasty, perhaps; he decided without even holding a council. Masson and all the other dangers that lurked at home were forgotten. He had promised, and he would fulfill. He dug up his file, scraped and swore his way through one of the iron hasps and one of the padlock bars and entered the arsenal. It was as he had expected: an eight-by-eight cellar piled with old Mauser rifles, pistols and copious ammunition. The former were in a woeful condition of rust, but there were also cleaning materials. After a few hours' work he had enough serviceable arms to equip a punitive expedition. The arsenal door he safeguarded as well as he could by piling against it coral blocks too large for one man to lift alone.

Eighteen of them sailed in a large outrigger canoe for Tenguiu. Six of the natives carried rifles and the two white men Lügers. Landing on Tenguiu was a somewhat difficult matter. There was no harbor, and one had to plunge through the surf on the lee side of the island, whichever that was, and walk to one's destination. If the wind changed while one was there, one had either to wait for it to change again or trans-

port the canoe overland to where the surf was negotiable.

Landing on the western shore, they had a walk of half a mile to the main village. Kit enjoyed the walk; the richness and variety of the vegetation was astonishing after the sparseness of Nairava, where only the cocoa palm and the pandanus and some useless shrubs grew easily. On Tenguiu numberless trees and plants grew in the greatest profusion; there were springs and brooks of fresh water and a general atmosphere of tropic luxuriance. To make up for that, the air of the jungle hummed with flies and mosquitoes.

They entered the great *maniaba,* a splendid structure eighty feet long and forty high, and called loudly for Ongong. He came, attended by most of the population. Kit stood before him and laid down the law. As a first measure he demanded the return of the outraged maidens. These were brought, but failed to show any enthusiasm at the sight of their deliverers. He then accused the Tenguians of broken promises, bad faith and general damnableness. He demanded reparation in kind and threatened extinction of the whole race if anything of the kind happened again. He fired his pistol into the air by way of giving point to his threats.

All were impressed; some of the Tenguians fled shrieking from the place. Ongong, however, remained calm and dignified. His excuse was of course ignorance; he had not dreamed that the peace of a few days ago included Naituvi. The expedition had merely been intended to punish certain transgressions of theirs; a worthless and contemptible people, he said ingratiatingly. However, if Nuei wished to flatter them with his protection, so be it. Reparation? Cer-

tainly; he ordered mats and taro roots and other material in abundance. Kit added to the list some bunches of bananas, a fruit which grew in profusion on Tenguiu.

Kit considered the expedition a triumph, but he was informed by Kakaiwia that there would be no peace till all the arm-bearing Tenguians, and more especially that dog Ongong, were underground. But he was unable to suggest what more could righteously have been demanded of them. The *uakana* had taken no lives.

The next move was made by Ongong a day later. He came over once more, bearing presents. There was a great deal of conversation, the upshot of which was that there were two white men, and two islands. One of the white men was king over one island; why not make his companion king over the other?

X

Kit fairly snapped at the suggestion. It would be a great thing to have Masson off the island, more especially now that the arsenal was open; also he was anxious to give the man every possible chance. What he did not see was that the wily Ongong would never have suggested the arrangement unless he had intended to profit by it.

"Masson," Kit announced when he had found him, "they want you to be King of Tenguiu. That fellow Ongong's over here now. How about it?"

"All right," said Masson. He was sitting under a palm tree on the ocean beach, barefooted, chewing some twig that the natives chewed in default of smoking materials. He did not look like a king, nor did he even seem greatly pleased by the offer. "I'll take some guns with me," he added.

Kit did not see how he could do otherwise than assent, and reflected that now he would have had to open the arsenal anyway. He could not in conscience have sent Masson unarmed among a crowd of savages while he himself had a stack of guns at his back door. "All right, I'll give you ten guns and fifty cartridges and that pistol, and keep the same for myself."

"You give me half the whole bunch, see?"

"No, I shan't. But it amounts to the same thing. I'll engage not to take out any more without sending an equal amount to you, if you want them."

"I want my half," said Masson.

"You'll have half of what we take out. Here, we'll make it sixteen guns, one pistol and a hundred rounds. Sixteen guns are enough to drill two squads with, if you want to have a Royal Guard."

Masson, with a pistol on his very hip, might at this juncture have insisted, but he did not. He was stupid, and doubtless he was mollified at the thought of being king over a bigger island than Kit. They counted out the rifles and cartridges, loaded them on the backs of willing natives and followed them down to the landing. Masson was going back with Ongong, to assume his exalted position as from that day.

Kit was on the whole in good spirits. This was the end of some things, and it was not clear what it might be the beginning of; but he did not see how he could have done differently under the circumstances. They shook hands as they parted; that favor Masson could hardly refuse now. "By the way, where's Sadie?" asked Kit as the new monarch flung his leg over the gunwale. "Aren't you going to take her with you?"

"Naw," said Masson.

CHAPTER VIII

I

HE stood watching the triangular sail as it sped up the lagoon before the southeast trade, and all at once his heart misgave him. A black cloud fell over the world. The arsenal open; two hundred rounds loose in the islands, with Masson in command of half of them; Masson in a position of power and, more than all, with the advantage of Ongong's brains. And Ongong—he had never abdicated, or pretended to abdicate, for the sake of Masson's bright eyes.

He sought out Kakaiwia. "Kak, I have a feeling we haven't see the last of those people . . ." And Kak's eyes were like an echo of his own fears.

"Nuei, they are sharks, not men. They love to fight—not to protect themselves, or for food, but just for the pleasure of fighting. And that Ongong. Nuei, no king of Nairava or Tenguiu has even given his power to another of his own accord. And Ongong hasn't done it. He is still king in Tenguiu. And he has as many guns as we."

Kit shrank from the man's accusing gaze. "It's a bad business. Yet I don't see how I could have done better, justly. I have the feeling that I've given Ongong everything he wanted, in spite of myself."

"He wanted the guns," said Kak mournfully. "He knew that Mattoni wouldn't come without them. And some time he'll try to get the rest."

"We won't let him."

"Take them out, then, Nuei! Take them out before he comes, and hide them!"

"But we've no place to put them. Besides, if we know they're after the arsenal it'll be easier to defend it. Oh, we won't let them have them, Kak. We aren't beaten yet."

A militaristic note came into the life; Kit was reminded of the "preparedness" talk at home in '15 and '16. He immediately started organizing his Royal Guard; this body, planned as a diversion and a gesture, was now a stark necessity. He picked sixteen youths from the cream of the island and drilled them in two squads for an hour early every morning. The work made them useless for the rest of the day and the heavy guns played havoc with their bare shoulders, but they enjoyed the game and had implicit confidence in their commander. It was pathetic to see them smile whenever he caught their eyes. And their South Sea sense of rhythm enabled them in a short time to drill beautifully, far more precisely than any U. S. Navy troops Kit had seen.

After he had taught them the elements of close and open order drill he realized that he must go on. There was no use in troops who could not shoot. These boys had never fired a gun in their lives, and would no doubt be ridiculously gun-shy. He rigged up a target on an unfrequented beach, taught them the trigger-squeeze and told them a thousand times that a rifle was dangerous, but only at one end. In two fairly satisfactory mornings of practice he used up nearly all his hundred rounds. He then wrote to Masson:

"I have used most of my cartridges in target practice and am taking out 50 more. I'll send you the

same number if you want them. Reply by bearer. How are things going? Good luck.—Newell."

It was dangerous, it was bad; but then he had promised. He sent over pencils and paper, which he had neglected to provide Masson with at first, and the answer, an ungainly scrawl, promptly arrived: "Send me 100, and be quick about it.—Masson."

Kit sent 50. Two days later came another message: "I used all them up in targit practiss. Send me 100 more." This made Kit bite his nails for a whole afternoon, as he invariably did when worrying.

Kakaiwia was sure that Masson was lying. "Wait," he advised. "They can't have fired shots without being heard all over the island. I can find out if he spoke the truth."

He could, having quite as efficient a spy system as Ongong. In due time he reported that only one shot had been fired on Tenguiu since Masson arrived, and that had been directed by the King at a certain young lady's husband and had wounded him severely in the leg.

Kit smiled, but Kak did not. "It means that he has more shots to fire than we have," he pointed out. "Nuei, don't send him any more!"

Nuei didn't. He wrote to Masson saying that he had reason to doubt his assertion about target practice, and until he had reason to think differently he would send no more ammunition. It was an argumentative letter, entirely peaceful in tone. The answer came: "You send them cartriges, or I'll come and get them."

This plainly meant business. It was evident how Masson's surly temper and Ongong's craft were combining for trouble. Kit made no reply, but instead posted guards along the lagoon shore by night. The

expected happened; under cover of darkness a canoeful of Tenguians slid up the lagoon. They were prevented from landing by some disturbance on the shore. This may have been the guard or a surprised pair of Cytherea's devotees; it was not clear. But it was certain that the Tenguians had fired several shots, though none had been fired at them; also that Masson, recognizable by his light-colored dungarees, had been of the party.

Next day Kit wrote him a last vigorous note, the closing document in his White Book:

"Masson, keep away. Your expedition of last night proves you lied to me about the cartridges. Your men fired, although ours did not. If you come again at night we shall shoot and shoot to kill. I don't know what you think you're going to gain by war, but if you want it you shall have it. Our arrangement about the guns is off.—Newell."

With this he sent a copy of an interesting state document devised and executed at a council meeting:

KINGDOM OF NAIRAVA

Whereas the people of Tenguiu have for long adopted a hostile and predatory attitude toward the people of Nairava, and

Whereas the people of Tenguiu, by notes written by their King, George Masson, have attempted to deceive the King and people of Nairava concerning the amount of ammunition in their possession, and

Whereas on the night of June 22, 1918, an armed expedition of Tenguians attempted to land on Nairava, firing shots though none were fired at them, and by the secrecy and hour of their visit giving ample proof of hostile intention,

Therefore the King and Council of Nairava hereby declare

that on and from this 23rd day of June, 1918, a state of war exists between the Kingdom of Nairava and that of Tenguiu.

KAKAIWIA,
ITIBWI, his mark,
ORIVEVE, CHRISTOPHER R
TETIKUTAIO, his mark,
MWAI, his mark,
KURIA, his mark,
For the Council.

II

The question now was whether the *uakana* would attempt to prosecute the war with what ammunition they already had or make an immediate try at the arsenal. Most likely the latter, since their first attempt had failed; in either case the same preparation would be used. Pickets were posted by night along both shores of Nairava proper with orders not to shoot or make any noise but fly like the wind to the Residenz at the approach of a canoe. And then on second thoughts Kit changed this. A new plan formed in his mind.

He gave orders that if a canoe came the pickets should fire, shout, show lights if possible and then run in a direction *away* from the Residenz, as though terrified. The shots, which he insisted on most, would give sufficient warning. At the main stockade entrance he posted his most trusty men, giving them exact and imperative orders. If any one came they were to feign sleep and drunkenness; shells with dregs of *mang-ing* were to be scattered about. On certain pain of death they must give no sign of consciousness. Other guards were posted about the stockade with other instructions.

The position of the men at the gate was not so dangerous as it seemed, for Kit was all but certain

that the enemy would attempt to enter the stockade by a gap near the Residenz which was perfectly familiar to Masson. His idea was to let them in unopposed, deceiving them as far as possible by silence and the forms of people scattered about, feigning sleep. As for himself, he knew that the flat tin roof of the Residenz commanded the arsenal and nearly all the space within its small stockade. Here, with the best shots in the Guard, he would take his stand (or more precisely, his stomach!), and wait till the enemy actually approached the arsenal door, the inevitable goal of his expedition. Then he would fire, and at that signal all the men posted about the stockade were to leap to life, yell and shoot at whatever foe offered the best target.

He was more than half sure that this elaborate plan would fail, but he could think of nothing better. And he became more thoroughly convinced that the enemy would try to get at the arms. "We'll come and get them," Masson had said. And a report came through spies that there had been more firing on Tenguiu; that probably meant target practice, certainly the loss of ammunition. They would have hardly enough left for a really murderous raid.

One night Kit went out to inspect his guards and found most of them asleep. He kicked them awake, swore loudly, and reflected that it didn't matter much. He slept on the arsenal side of the Residenz; any sound would wake him, and he could almost certainly steal up the ladder to the roof without being observed.

III

For three days he went about chewing his nails, dead to all pleasure in life. He sifted his mind for

other plans, but could find none that would more probably suit the enemy's purpose. They wanted to get at the arms, and to command the arsenal door seemed the one sound policy.

He was so wakeful, unable to sleep through the smallest sound, that he took courage. He sent Etera home, and kept his two sharpshooters in the room with him. And then one night he awoke in the dim starlight and knew that the time had come. There was dead silence, but just before he awoke he had heard a shot.

And then, after an interval, more shots, from the northward.

He waked his two men, arranged the room as though no one had slept there and led the way up the ladder through the little trap door at the top. He was wearing an old moth-eaten ragged frock coat that the Germans had left, being afraid that his uniform or his skin would be visible in the darkness. He lay down on the side facing the arsenal, his gun resting on the low paling, a Nairavan on either side of him, and waited.

There was no moon, and they could see nothing except the arsenal and a dim maze of trees behind it. But one could see figures if they appeared down there, he was sure of it. But none appeared; no shot, no sound. The minutes dribbled away; his stomach ached with suspense; the thing was a failure—or more likely a delusion. He had heard no shots. . . .

And then a footfall, in the building below. That was Masson; no native ever made a noise in walking.

They were seaching the building for him, from room to room, and—idiot! He had forgotten the most important thing. They would think of the ladder, climb up and look for him, and there was no lock

on the trap. Fool! Nincompoop! For now he could not turn without making a noise. The only thing to do was to turn like lightning when the trap opened, and fire.

Then his fears dissolved as he heard footsteps passing under the building, on his left. In a moment he saw Masson and two natives emerge from behind the corner of the Residenz and advance stealthily across the brief open space between the two buildings. They stopped as they reached the arsenal stockade, gathering under it, preparatory to rushing the entrance. The three sprang like cats, paused, finding the place unguarded, and then stepped up to the pile of coral blocks that lay in front of the arsenal door. They set to work removing the smaller blocks on top, working with very creditable lack of noise.

The stock of Kit's rifle was cold on his cheek. It grew warm, and still he did not fire. His wrists were aching, his forehead burning; he was in agony.

It was the panic, worse than he had ever known it. There were two alternatives; shoot to kill or shoot not to kill. He thought, with a discordant note of humor, of aiming at Masson's buttocks, presented full to him. That was the way of mercy.

But it wasn't *the* way; it wasn't doing the job. The job was peace, and there would be no peace while Masson was alive. The job was the King's job, not Kit Newell's. And then—this with overwhelming force—whatever harm came of it, ultimately, would come to him, not to Masson. And if he couldn't face harm for the sake of the people, *his* people . . .

He slanted his sights to the middle of Masson's back and compressed his hand; the world shook. The man threw up his arms and fell backward, harmless as a rabbit. There was thunder from the two guns

by Kit, and shots and yells from further off, but he hardly heard them. The two men with Masson rushed away, shrieking; one of them fell just under the Residenz wall and lay groaning, clasping his middle.

Slowly Kit raised himself on his hands, to his feet, half expecting to be shot dead. Was it all over, so quickly? He went down the ladder and out of the building, followed by the two soldiers. "See to that man," he said, pointing to the wounded Tenguian.

Masson lay on his left side; blood flowed from his mouth and darkened the dark ground. "Masson," said Kit, bending over him, "it's I, Newell. Do you want to say anything?"

The man quivered and groaned; blood choked him.

"Masson, I did it. I'm sorry I had to, but I'm not sorry I did it. There was no other way. . . ." But he knew he was not talking to Masson.

The quiverings and gaspings slowly abated; Kit never knew just when he died. When he got up the stars were fading and dawn was cold over the ocean.

IV

The war, as President Wilson put it some months later, thus came to an end. The Tenguian loss was two killed and perhaps a few slightly wounded; all but Masson and his companion regained their canoe and their island in safety. There were no Nairavan casualties.

That afternoon Kit took two armed canoes over to Tenguiu and dictated terms. He demanded every rifle and cartridge on the island, on pain of instant execution of the entire population. All the rifles and thirty-eight cartridges were handed over, and he was satisfied. He then told Ongong that no further meas-

ures would be taken, but that henceforth he would rule over Tenguiu as king.

Kakaiwia and the Council were convinced it was best that way, and on the whole Kit agreed. Ongong if left independent might cause further trouble; Ongong as sub-chief and viceroy (or as a private citizen, if he demurred) would be sensible. He could send over the exacted tribute, and take his orders from Nuei. It was the only way to save anything for himself.

Kit briefly outlined his plan, which was to rule Tenguiu exactly as he did Nairava, coming over at stated intervals to hold a council. He would be ready at all times to come if needed, and to uphold the government by force of arms. He would endeavor to give peace and prosperity, to forget the past and finally he would commend the island, with Nairava, to the care of that mythical foreign power.

The elders nodded gravely. They knew when their game was up, and they were rather pleased at having a white ruler, especially one who had shown so much dash and resource in warfare. An act of accession was drawn up and duly signed. Kit left the island the only Dual Monarch in the world, except Karl Hapsburg.

Masson was buried in the little bare sun-dazzled cemetery by the ocean. Kit had a smooth board prepared as a headstone, and on it with some difficulty he carved this inscription:

George Masson
1st Class Seaman, U. S. N.
King of Tenguiu
Died June 26, 1918

He wondered if Masson was able to appreciate the calm dignity of the words, the changing splendors of sea and sky about him—or any other good thing that God had made.

CHAPTER IX

I

HAVING plenty of time and paper at hand, Kit kept a diary during the ensuing months, a detailed and soulful document. Under a date in September occurs this passage:

". . . I thought at first that with the war over and Masson out of the way I was never going to have another care on this island. But my nails are just as short, from being bitten, as they were during the war. Why should one worry as hard in prosperity as in adversity? I suppose it's one result of having what Jack used to call a neat mind."

The reflection, however exaggerated, had a basis of truth. There were diversions, of course: *ruoios* and bathes and trips of exploration and shark-catching and torchlight fishing. Also drilling; he enlarged his Guard to thirty-two and devised a uniform for them. Also baseball; the natives made balls, braided out of pandanus leaves, roughly cubical, but serviceable balls, and they used to play games between villages. There was also the not unheard-of diversion of love, of which more anon. Yet he never could apply his full attention to these as another man might have done. His mind was not only inclined to worry but avid to learn; a large part of his bother was the result of mere intelligence.

It was all immensely interesting. Here he was, alone among people whom a few months ago he would have lightly dismissed as "savages," of whose general

kind he had known nothing when he landed. He soon found that savages—the term is of course an improper one for the Nairavans—were as much people as New Yorkers, and that savagery is as much an institution as Tammany Hall. They had their *mores,* laws, arts, politics and economic problems as naturally and inevitably as they had a climate and a soil. The whys and wherefores of these gradually transpired to Kit: for instance, he presently understood that the basic reason for the Tenguians' warlikeness was the old business of Satan finding mischief still for idle hands to do. On a coral atoll one has to work for one's living; on a volcanic island one does not, or much less so; hence a host of differences.

And he was tremendously stimulated as it dawned on him that here was a South Sea community nearly in its original state. It had decreased in numbers since its opening to the world, but far less than most. The Germans had been in active possession for hardly more than a decade, and in the three years since they had left their impression had been largely obliterated. Education, religion, trade, disease—all these had disappeared or diminished, and insensibly the islanders had been lapsing back into their old habits of mind, body and belief. It was surprising how well they got along.

There were about seven hundred people on the two islands, or possibly a little more. Nairava proper held nearly two hundred and fifty, Naituvi something under one hundred, and Tenguiu's figure was substantially more than these two combined. This population was divided into two castes, the nobles, comprising the chiefs and their kin, roughly about one-sixth of the whole, and the others. In the old days the lower class had been divided into landed and landless, but now there was enough land for every one, though some

paid a nominal rent in kind. Although at many times, as in the *ruoio* or in various forms of communal fishing, class distinctions were forgotten, they were firmly embedded in the native mind as the fundamental social order. The nobles might have as many as three wives, whereas the others were allowed only one; certain forms of speech were used toward them, and only them; certain matters were tabu in their presence.

Land constituted practically the only form of wealth. The Germans had introduced currency, but it had fallen into disuse except during the rare visits of trading ships. All the productive land belonged to definite owners, and though the boundaries were unfenced and apparently unmarked there was a great deal of feeling if they were overstepped. More than half the cases which came up before the Council involved trespass in some form or other. The land, of course, was chiefly valuable for the production of cocoanut and pandanus trees, the two plants which enabled the natives to sustain life. All their vegetable food, all their building and clothing materials, were derived from these two trees.

Government was by the village chiefs assembled in council, one of them being king. The office was nominally hereditary, but the council had power to elect and depose, under appropriate circumstances. The king was, to all intents and purposes, as powerful as he could make himself. It was a question of how much he could persuade the council to do, and this was soon made entirely clear to King Nuei.

The laws were complicated and entirely static. They were also codified, but only in the minds of the Old Men, there being no native writing; hence it followed that a council consisting of men with long memories was not so undesirable as might at first appear.

The laws, as Kit began to learn them, seemed incredible, Gilbertesque (W. S., not Islands) in their buoyant inconsistency. The marriage laws in particular were most involved. A woman never lost her caste; if she married into the monogamous class she remained head of the household and had the right to marry more than one husband. From this it followed that misalliances were not wholly unpopular among noble ladies. But the husband or husbands, though of the lower class, had every right to punish infidelity on her part, while she had no redress against infidelity on theirs. The penalty for adultery was murder of the paramour—if you could get him; no one else was going to bother. Murder of a husband, or of a wife not proved unfaithful, or of a person in a higher class, was penalized by death. Murder of a commoner by a noble was punished by a method exquisitely adjusted to prevent the crime: the murderer was obliged to support the bereaved family till they all died or married. Murder of a parent, on the other hand, was a mere matter of a fine, and murder of a minor child by a parent was not punishable at all. Abortion was a mere matter of taste.

After passing through the inevitable stages of amusement and scandalization, Kit perceived that there was a reason for all these things, and that the reason in most cases was the need of making the productivity of the country suffice for the population. Thus the law on abortion, an act which in the old days had been compulsory after the third child, was a sheer triumph for Malthus, and that on infanticide was simply an extension of it. Of course many of the laws were no longer adjusted to the conditions and went contrary to each other and common reason; but the Nairavans made little of that.

Kit reacted, began arguing hotly; then stopped. Better not to start changing till he knew all there was to be changed. He spent hours writing at the dictation of the older chiefs; Itibwi was a mine of information; so was old Mwai, the premier chief of Naituvi, thrice married and gayly begetting children at over seventy. It took him weeks to collect all they knew, and then there was the work of classifying and studying it. At this task he spent his mornings, and made it the main routine work of government.

He presently decided, and so informed the Council, that the killing of one person by another was not to be allowed, except by due process of trial and firing squad. Not even, the astonished elders asked, if the victim had committed a crime deserving death? No. But if he deserved death, the Council would punish him? Yes. Then why waste their time; why not simply announce the law and leave every man to act within it? Because—here Kit began to have an unpleasant vague feeling—the individual was not capable of interpreting or enforcing the law justly. Why not? They always had. If a man overstepped it, he was punished.

It took a good deal of time and patience to argue down this sort of thing, but he made progress. Kit was weak on experience of sociology and law, but he had the sense to use the Council's own weapon against them, the power of boredom. Point after point he won from them by the sheer force of reiterated statement. First murder, then rape, destroying trees, arson, fouling fish nets, adultery—the Code Nuei gradually took shape. Imprisonment was revived, the old German jail renovated and a jailer installed. People were tried for offenses, acquitted or

convicted according to sound principles, imprisoned (in a few cases)—actually languishing in obedience to justice as he saw it. The neat mind functioned.

II

One thing worried him from the very first, and he knew no rest till he had righted it. There were two springs on the island, both on the thickest part, near the main village; and by their medium skin diseases were kept flourishing. It was Kit's idea to place a strict tabu on all bathing and washing in them, and surround them with a neat coping and pavement of coral blocks. The Council protested; fresh water, though brackish, made much better washing than salt, as Nuei would know if he tried. Nuei had tried; he was not placing a tabu on washing in fresh water, merely a tabu on washing in the common supply. The Council were impervious to this logic, as they were to the references he made to Naituvi's and the smaller villages' comparative freedom from yaws; all they could see was an infringement of liberty.

The King was guilty of playing politics. He had observed that the two Naituvian chiefs and one Nairavan, representatives of springless districts, were inclined to be amused at the thought of the more fortunates ones being partially deprived of their natural blessing. He talked with them privately, got them talking for him and finally won a majority for the measure. The coping was built, the tabu launched, and within a few weeks the yaws actually showed a decrease.

"We have with us to-day," said Kit in grim triumph, "the Surgeon-General Gorgas of the South Seas."

III

A man of the lower class died, leaving a widow, one Ue (Blossom), and two young children. Kit found that he was expected to adopt them all. It came in very neatly, as they could live in the stockade and keep house for him, thus relieving Aitaki's wife of the burden. Ue quite unmistakably hinted that she was not unwilling to receive her new possessor in another relation, but Kit forbore, without difficulty. She was a somewhat faded Blossom of thirty-five, an age at which South Sea women do not retain much *allure*. Kakaiwia laughed heartlessly at the comedy; Kit chided him. Did he not hold the woman and her children in the sacred trust of Lord Chancellor?

Aitaki had from the first favored Kit with a multitude of suggestions. He was a foolish, useless, bothering man, without half the initiative or capacity of his son, but Kit could not but listen to some of his pleas. In the old days, under German rule, his had been a prominent and powerful position on the island, quite overshadowing that of the king. He had kept church and kept school, and the Resident had seen to it that the people went. That had changed with the Germans' departure; school was completely dead, and the only hint Kit had received of religion was an occasional sound of hymn-singing. Aboriginal superstition had rearisen in their place; there were grave-watchings and witch-rites and stories of vampire-like apparitions; all most deplorable.

He revived both institutions promptly. School was rather a gay affair; it took place after breakfast, in the cool of the morning, and was attended by any one who cared to go between the ages of one and one hundred. The scholars were separated according to

sex and read from small filthy paper-bound Bibles and readers in Gilbertese, chiefly in concert. They had "number work," incredibly sketchy, on a screeching blackboard. Kit at one session saw Aitaki add seven and eight as fourteen, fifteen and seventeen, and was inclined to sympathize with the pupils' attitude toward the man's teaching qualifications. When he could give the time he took over the session himself, and then there was more attention and vigor.

On Sundays the same crowd gathered in the same place for divine worship. The islanders decked themselves out in all the finery they had, though it was neither much nor fine. The women wore holokus if they had them, no matter how ragged and filthy, and invariably hats. Aitaki was formal, not to say ritualistic, on that point. After one horrified glance at the first congregation Kit announced that hereafter flower wreaths would be deemed sufficient covering, and Aitaki subsequently gave him a hot hour of protest. It was all like that: all form, no matter. The congregation yawned and slept voluptuously; babies screamed; girls tittered; boys rough-housed. Kit did his best to infuse a spark of life into the ceremonies; as soon as he got sufficient control of the language he preached sermons. He coached himself diligently in a Gilbertese Bible and worked hard to make valid to his people some few principles of Christian ethics, giving theology and dogma a wide berth. At first the people, impressed, attended scrupulously; then as the novelty wore off they would succumb, and the exercises became duels between Nuei and Morpheus. When he saw any one drop off Kit would drop his argument, point and yell; the offender's neighbors, shouting with laughter, would poke him awake, and soon he was laughing as loudly and merrily as the rest.

"Shut up, now," the king-priest would order wearily. "Don't laugh in church. I won't have laughing in church; Iedo Kirito hates that. Well: Blessed are the pure in heart . . ."

His voice labored on; the dim rafters brooded; the motley crowd stifled their yawns and furtively stretched their agonized muscles. Fans flopped in the breathless heat; flies buzzed; through the open sides of the building drifted the inextinguishable whisper of surf.

"We have with us to-day," Kit noted, "the Archbishop of Titipu."

Once he took the trouble to write down a list of the offices comprising that of king. They were:

Commander-in-chief,
Presiding Officer of the Council,
Lord Chancellor,
Chief Justice,
Attorney General,
Minister of Health,
Minister of Public Works,
Minister of Education,
Archbishop.

A Pooh-Bah in the flesh. And the joke of it was that his exercise of these offices was not merely nominal; he had actually performed their functions. Imperfectly, no doubt, and on a tiny scale, but he had performed them.

This was in August. He had not stopped to reflect before, but the fact was that the Thing To Be Done was, in a measure, done. The hopes and oaths of his accession were being fulfilled and redeemed. The inevitable happened: he began to feel pleased with himself, seriously and devoutly pleased.

IV

"Oh, God!" he prayed. "Don't let me get stuck up over this! Just because these people do what I say, and take my word on everything from England to obstetrics, don't let me get a swelled head! Don't let me be like Tarquinius Superbus! Keep me a good fellow, Lord—I've simply *got* to be a good fellow . . ."

It was hard. His loneliness and his very safety made it harder. For the first week or two he had half believed that the *Nashua* might call on the chance of finding him; she could not have been far away when he left her. Then that hope died, and the roaring empty ocean, laughing unceasingly, day after day, seemed to kill all faith in other relief. Then his security: Tenguiu was perfectly quiet, and the anxiety that would have kept him alert and humble was missing. The one remaining danger of the arsenal was solved by a ridiculously simple method that he kicked himself for not having thought of at once; he transferred the padlock from the tool box of the dory to the unbroken hasp of the iron door, then oiled and buried both key and file.

The thing he privately thought of as "Tarquinism" cropped out in curious little ways. He recognized it, he criticized it; but his loneliness and responsibility, by a perfectly comprehensible process of thought, demanded that a certain minimum of it be respected. Damn it, he *owed* some things to himself!

There was the matter of signing the documents which the neat mind decreed should memorialize each act and law. In his first expansive merriment he had signed them "Christopher R," "Christopher the King," or whatever had suited the fancy of the moment. His

act of accession to Tenguiu he had signed "Christopher R I." This presently came to appear absurd and undignified, yet he could not bring himself to use his ordinary signature; a king was a king. He presently compromised on "Nuei R"; to his subjects he was universally known as Nuei, and no other name was really appropriate. He went so far as to erase his previous signatures and affix this in their place.

But there was one document, the Murder Law, his first legislative achievement, whose signature he hated to alter. He had signed it "I the King," reminiscently of the Spanish mode. There was to him a curiously haunting quality to that. It was the sort of thing that only a very grand person could write, yet oddly enough it also seemed the sort of thing that every one could, even should, sign himself on occasion. A human being was monarch of his own secret kingdom; he was responsible, inalienably, regardless of outward circumstance. If every man, in making the major decisions of his life, were to face this power and responsibility frankly, he could not but increase in strength and clear-sightedness. If every woman about to take the fatal step were to make out a mental order of self-exile and sign it "I the Queen," the adulterous front door would bang less often. It would be a death blow to modern English drama, but the world might be a better place . . .

So that signature stood.

V

The matter of dress suggested another seemly act of self-recognition. He soon discarded his uniform and went about in a native *be* and pigskin slippers, with the addition of a native hat, broad and floppy,

to wear in the sun. There was nothing else to do. But one day as he walked down to the *maniaba* for a Council, full of the cares and holy pride of state, and indistinguishable, save for the lightness of his skin, from the poorest of his subjects, he suddenly decided it wouldn't do. He should wear some distinguishing dress on formal occasions.

"I ought to have a Crown," he reflected, "and not only a Crown, but a Robe. By George, I will, too!"

The Nairavans wore no head dress except flowers and straw hats, so he could take no model from them. After long cogitation he bethought himself of the white shiny *tapa* cloth which the natives of Tenguiu beat out of the fiber of the mulberry. He had a cap made of the finest of this material obtainable, and surrounded it with a row of spikes cut from pearly oyster shell that the islanders were wont to use for fish hooks. From the *tapa* he also had a robe made, loose-sleeved, reaching to midway between knee and ankle. He also discovered that the natives could make a purplish dye out of a certain shellfish (Tyrian purple; who fished the murex up, what porridge had John Keats?); it was a light, rather dull color, but not unpleasing, and he had a border of this put round the robe. While he was about it he had a flag made and had two purple stripes put on it, running lengthwise, in about the position of the yellow stripes on the Spanish flag. This was hoisted in front of the *maniaba* during Council sessions, and the King presided robed and crowned.

When Ue brought him the completed garments he put them on and stood regarding himself in the one cracked mirror in the Residenz, pathetically anxious not to find the effect ridiculous. It could not be called wholly majestic: he had a scraggy beard and the hair

grew long over his ears. And the garments—well, they did not remind him of King George's coronation regalia.

"I look like nothing so much as the White Queen on a chessboard," he told himself; "rather broken and dirty and in imminent danger of being taken by a black pawn. I'm glad Jack can't see me now—gosh, how he'd laugh! I'm afraid it's carrying the thing a bit too far. If I can't do better than this perhaps it would be more dignified to do nothing at all. . . .

"No. The crown fits the kingdom—and the king. I'll wear it."

VI

One thing Aitaki had tried to be particularly firm about with particular lack of success, and that was the wrongness of *ruoios*. He had been taught by missionaries in Samoa that all dancing was wicked, *per se*, and it worried him incessantly that the Nairavans had indulged in the practice unchecked since the Germans' departure. Kit heard him in pained amazement; he did not blame the man so much as his teachers. It was all very well to stop obscene performances, but he had seen none that were in the least so. That this original and exquisite art, the highest product of South Sea civilization, should be killed by the prurient snobbery of an "enlightened" race was a little too much.

"No," he told Aitaki, "the *ruoios* will go on. If I see anything off color I'll stop it, I promise you that much. But they'll go on as before, while I'm here—and if I have anything to do with it they'll go on after I leave, too."

And they went on, regularly during full moons and at times of fête. Kit always attended; he went over

to see those on Tenguiu, which were slightly different; he suggested new stories and sagas. He actually saw the rude Nairavans act out, after their manner, the story of *Hamlet,* and to his amazement found it as popular here as elsewhere. The eternal discrepancy between human aim and human accomplishment—no human being could be dead to the poignancy of that tragedy. Many of the natives wept over it, and Kit's own eyes were moist.—But he thought, on reflection, that he might justly claim to have been a little more effective than Hamlet.

VII

He thought a great deal about the nature and state of a king, and wrote interminably of it in his diary. "There is something," he set down in September, "about this king business. The word occurs in every language I know anything of, and its meaning is always the same and unmistakable. If an absolute and hereditary office begins with another title, that title takes on the meaning of king—e.g., Imperator, Calif. In its essence it's simply a business arrangement; people want a leader in war, an executive in peace. And yet essentially there would seem to be something divine in the idea, too.

"I suppose it's because it's so deucedly hard for a man to rule even himself. When he rules, or undertakes to rule, others as well, he takes on the nature of a superman. And sometimes I feel some such uncanny suggestion in myself. Not that I feel myself *better* than any one else—but I sometimes get a sort of belief in divine guidance. I mean so much and so well; the human machinery is so miserably insufficient; there *must* be something beyond to direct and sustain

me. Even if the incumbent is unworthy, the office deserves and demands it.

"There's something [*awful,* erased] awe-inspiring in responsibility over other people. The greatness of the need, the paucity of the power. . . .

"I really believe the guiding motive is service. All great rulers have served. I get along best by fixing my mind on that and forgetting everything else. That sounds like a Y.M.C.A. meeting—I can't help it—the language is poor."

Under another date: "These people can't get it into their heads why the President of the U. S. is not king. If he isn't 'keeng' he can't amount to much, they think. Isn't he a good man? He is, I allow. But in our country they elect the ruler for four years only, and—Then why isn't he king for four years? Their idea of him is a sort of *fainéant,* without power or even the name, a pitiable creature. And this although the idea of electing a ruler is perfectly familiar to them, and although they invest their own king with no special insignia. I don't understand this. Their notion of government is a sort of bastard between monarchy and democracy.

"But are the two so unreconciliable? There's England. There, as in Nairava, the king reigns and in a sense rules, but the Old Men govern."

Under another date: "The Council passed my Abortion and Infanticide Bill to-day, at last, after three weeks' bickering. It's a big change for them, to declare things illegal that always have been legal, and I wonder if I ought to have done it. We haven't decided on the penalties yet—it's hard to fix up anything less than capital punishment. But I've been walking on air all the afternoon.

"It's right, I know it's right, and I've put it over.

It's a matter of taste, I suppose, the pleasure such things give me. If I had another type of mind I suppose I'd be keen on manufactures or trade or natural history or something. My line is something else—establishing right thinking and acting, one might call it. And the feeling it gives me, to put something over in that line—it's like nothing else. It's so extraordinary. What is a person of my age and experience expected to know—what can he know, about such things as abortion? Why, at home it would be thought not quite nice for me to know much about it. And yet I've come to grips with it, I've made a law about it, and the law *goes*. It's grotesque—but the feeling it gives!"

And then under another date: "I'm a fool. A man in Naituvi cut off his wife's ear the other day, for reasons. I did nothing about it; I thought it was rather a good thing. The marriage laws aren't in shape yet, and I doubt if they ever will be. But blood poisoning set in, and to-day the woman died. I was over there nearly all day—her head swelled and it was ghastly—and what could I do, without even a bottle of peroxide? And still I feel I'm responsible. I'm not, of course, and still I am.

"I can't have that repeated, it's unthinkable. But how to prevent it? And what can I do to the man? He acted within his rights. How am I to frame a law that will safeguard the home and prevent that sort of thing—and pass the Council? Oh, Lord!

"Things like that happen quite often. I don't write about them here. I try to forget them, but they prey on me. All my success and safety and the extraordinariness of this experience turns to ashes. Incidents like this, each one is like a scar on me, a black mark. Failure thirty-six, failure thirty-seven, all with their

serial numbers; Kit Newell weighed and found wanting again.

"It makes it so hard to go on—"

This was not Tarquinism, at any rate.

CHAPTER X

I

KIT rather hurried into his first marriage. He was quite normally curious; all his life he had remained chaste, and it now seemed that that condition might honorably cease. Yet, characteristically, he preferred to call it marriage. The neat mind again.

Her name was Onauti, Flying Fish, and she came from the house of Itibwi. He had her picked out before the end of the war, almost before Masson had gone to Tenguiu. Her hair stood out from her head in a rather alarming fashion, but she was quite pretty and very gay and just seventeen.

First he asked Kakaiwia, in the strictest confidence, if it would be quite all right, and was scornfully informed that it would be all right for him to choose any woman in the world, married or single. So he proposed, and put the family in an ecstasy of excitement. That was after the war, and there was no need for more time than was necessary for the cooking of food, so the marriage took place two days later. He brought gifts; he sat on a mat with his intended and ate food with her; followed more gifts, general feasting, strong waters, dancing. Kit was tired to death when it was all over.

She was so nice and simple and so fond of him that it seemed a shame to criticize her, but after a week he could not but admit that she bored him. Her

conversation, quaint and amusing at first, became monotonous. "I love you, Nuei. You are like a great wave that comes over the reef without breaking. You are as strong and supple as a shark swimming in the sea. Your eyes are like the sea under the northeast wind; your arms are like palm tree stems, your skin is soft like the breast of a young dove." Nuei failed to see the resemblance.

Often she told stories, of which she knew a countless number; Kit wrote these down until he got tired of them. "There was a red and black land crab who was a witch. She climbed cocoanut trees and sucked the juice out of the flowers, and the trees died. The trees belonged to a man called Nuti, and one night Nuti climbed up to the witch-crab and said, 'Ho! Why do you suck the juice out of my flowers and kill my trees?' And the witch said . . ."

She sang songs, which were more interesting; Kit took down over a hundred of these. They were naïve and foolish, but they had a certain lyrical sweep to them. Passion, the sea, death and bits of schoolroom knowledge were all treated with the same gay yearning impotence.

Paddle the canoe, paddle the canoe fast, O! I am going to Manihiki, I am going to Hawaii, I am going to catch shellfish on the beaches of Manua. Paddle the canoe into the bay, into the bay, O!

Sydney is in Australia, Paris is in France, Berlin is in Germany, alas! Germany.

Swim down, swim down to me, O beloved with breasts that stand out. For I am under water, and a shark has got hold of my leg and he hurts, alas! Swim down, swim fast, O beloved with breasts that stand out.

The wood dove coos in the evening, the wood dove coos in the palms. His voice is the voice of my lover, my lover who went away. Coo to me, my wood dove, my lover, alas!

The King of Germany has one brother, and he is Henry, Henry, O! The King of Germany has one wife, and she is Victoria.

Soon Onauti announced that she was going to have a baby. She was more than half apologetic, and offered to do something about it, if that were Nuei's wish. There was a medicine woman . . .

"Certainly not," said Nuei, shocked beyond expression.

II

The second marriage, which followed with a promptness that at the time seemed perfectly natural and later perfectly incomprehensible, was the result of something much more closely resembling love. On one of his visits to Tenguiu he noticed a young girl lolling about with some others, and could not take his eyes off her. She was very young, only fifteen, and was the daughter of an obscure but respectable commoner. She had a beautiful clear bronze skin, lighter than many, and a pronounced Malay cast of features. Her forehead was high; her eyebrows were fine flat curves; the nose straight and short, and narrow as his own. Her eyes and mouth were her most striking features; the former deep-set, perfectly placed and both soft and firm in their gaze; the latter broad and rather heavy, especially as to the lower lip, but strongly indicative of power and passion. It was a beautiful face of the moody, strong-willed, uncertain sort, and Kit promptly went wild over it.

In a very real state of trepidation, not of the family or the state but of the girl herself, he brought his suit. The parents were only too delighted at the prospect of alliance with the royal house, and the Tenguians in general, though they would have preferred him to choose a chief's daughter, were well pleased. Even on Nairava the match was popular. But as to the girl, he simply could not tell. She accepted, consented and never batted an eyelid over her unfathomable eyes. When all the feasting was over, and he sat beside her in the canoe that took them home, the girl silent, unwinkingly intent on the horizon line, it was in him to think he had been most rash. Whenever he spoke to her she turned her head slowly and her mouth, not opening, would curve into a polite, perfectly enigmatic smile, most disconcerting. He wondered if he would live to see another dawn.

She was a complete fraud, except in her name, Naouea, Swell-wave Which Does Not Break. She had the best temper and the most placid disposition in the world. She was an admirable housewife, capable and quiet; she never bothered. She never showed the faintest trace of jealousy, as Onauti sometimes did, and still she was affectionate and tender and faithful. She was a jest of nature, the temperament of a clam in the shell of Medea.

The discovery did not dash his fascination, but rather increased it. No other woman had begun to give him such a thrill. He decided it sprang from the remarkable effect she gave of self-respect. She, he was sure, was mistress of her secret kingdom, and she did not foolishly fancy that Love itself could infringe on its sacred boundaries. That "one life, one body" delusion, which had always represented to him the height of human idiocy, had no place in her. She

did not compare his skin to the breast of a dove, or vow that she had no life but in him; she simply loved him, and carried on.

His views on love, foggy and sophomoric hitherto, underwent expansion. In spite of his heresy on the one-life-one-body point he had looked forward with a certain fearful delight to the grand passion that would sweep all else before it. That was not to be expected, still less to be desired; what he had was much finer.

It all seemed quite clear to him one afternoon as he sat with Naouea on the ocean beach, far from human habitation (the native buildings being all on the lagoon side), alone with the sun and the sand and the sky. Behind them was a thick grove of pandanus trees, whose many buttressing stalks rose spectrally out of a filmy undergrowth; on the edge of this, where the beach ended, was a sharp little declivity a foot or so high, against which they leaned. Naouea had one elbow propped on this and was sleeping; Kit was writing his diary. Suddenly as he sat gazing at the girl, thinking not of her but of what he was writing, she stirred; her eyes opened; she gave him a glance, half a smile, half a wink, a small wriggle, and settled into sleep again. Kit flamed with delight—it was so illuminating of their relationship, comfortable, understanding, intimate withal; wholly delicious.

So this was love.

He broke off what he had been writing and put down his thoughts as they came:

"The most striking thing about love is the complete failure of fulfillment to fulfill. I see now what expert lovers, Frenchmen chiefly, see in the game. Not the unmentioned ecstasies of the bedroom—when they can be had for five francs! It's a thing of wits, humor,

imagination, numberless and exquisitely varied combinations of character and circumstance.

"Hyperion to a satyr! To a person with a mind what can the glutting of a sense mean? The real, the surviving things in people—their souls—don't communicate through that one animal sense. How then? By simple speech, looks, movements of a hand—things you might exchange with a clerk over a ribbon counter.

"Virgins may take heart. What they miss is nothing, in mere voluptuous pleasure, to the sensations of sleeping and waking. If they miss the other thing, the soul thing, that's a different matter, but fulfillment can never give it to them. Fulfillment is little enough, even with that; without it, simply nothing.

"But I suppose no one can believe that without finding it out by experience. Certainly I didn't. And yet I might have known. Things spiritual are of the spirit, things mental are of the mind. What is the rest but (as Jack said) mere biology?"

III

Tenguiu worried its sovereign. His relations with the island were necessarily looser than those with the atoll. It was not that he feared disaffection; Ongong was amenable and the people orderly. It was the lack of a sound and permanent basis of native intercourse that bothered him.

He supposed that a really clever person could have brought about a profitable trade, but for the life of him he could not see how. The trouble was that the advantages were all on one side, Tenguiu's. It produced many things that the atoll did not, and the atoll had nothing to offer in the way of manufactures

that the Tenguians were not able to make for themselves.

Tenguiu's most important natural products were the banana and the *babai,* the latter a species of taro with an edible root. Both formed welcome additions to the inexpressibly dreary diet of the atoll. Of course Kit could have all he wanted of these by simply ordering it dumped into a canoe, and did; but he wanted the Nairavans to enjoy these fruits as well. And they had nothing to offer in return, nothing. The neat mind ached over this.

He could draw a little, a just recognizable pencil sketch of a head, a slightly more so one of a house or landscape. Finding that the Tenguians coveted these he executed them and gave them in exchange for canoe loads of *babai* and bananas and other things, which he distributed among the Nairavans. That was the nearest thing to trade he was able to effect, and it wasn't very near, because in most cases he had to give other pictures to the Nairavans to pay them for the trouble of bringing over the produce.

Both *babai* and bananas could be grown on Nairava, the former by means of trenches and artificial fertilization, the latter by importing soil from Tenguiu, but only the most enterprising landowners took the trouble to do so. This industry Nuei undertook to encourage, establishing *babai* pits on the royal domain and laboring mightily in them himself, by way of example. He found that the example produced little more than guttural amusement, and racked his brains. Pictures would become worthless if made too common; he must think of something else. Presently he discovered he could sing; he had never suspected it before, but he found that his vocal organs were actually capitalizable. He paid frequent and regular visits to the several

villages; if the *babai* was plentiful and doing well, a song and dance or two was forthcoming in the local *maniaba;* otherwise, only scoldings and sour looks.

Ludicrous and insufficient as these attempts were (and he did not flatter himself they were otherwise), they were, in a measure, sanctified. They represented his best endeavor to perform the functions of President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of Agriculture. After all, it was not given to every man to succeed; the main thing was to try.

IV

Late in November a ship put into the lagoon, a New Bedford schooner. Commerce had not quite abandoned these islands, though politics had, and this was not the first ship that had turned up since the Germans left. In an immense state of excitement Kit paddled out to it, thinking this was the end.

"*Clarissa* ahoy!" he called, reading the name on the bow. The half dozen heads visible on deck turned to him, suddenly aware of kindred race.

"Hello!" said a tall raw-boned Yankee in his thirties. "What t'hell. Englishman, hey? Got any copra?"

"No," said Kit, "Yankee. Yes, we've got copra, some. Say, are you the skipper? I'd like to talk with you."

"Yep. Come aboard. Swig o' something?"

He climbed aboard and sat drinking gin and water over the cabin table with the captain who, with his clean-shaven face and boyish manners, was about as unlike the traditional sailing-master as could be. He was agreeable and most interested in Kit's story, but when it was tactfully suggested that government and

ship's crew unite in some sort of a formal possession-taking of the islands in the name of their country, he was prompt and definite in refusal.

"No, sir, no politics for mine. No rows with any one, native or white. I won't even sell guns or liquor to the natives when I can, which is oftener'n you'd think. You, you're a Navy man, 's well's a King, and mebbe you got some right to say. But my line's business, straight and simple. Damn poor business it is, too, by and large. Jaluit was my last port. Ever been there? Hell of a place. Everything twenty miles from everything else. Traipse around a whole week to get five cents' worth of copra."

"That's in the Marshalls, isn't it?" said Kit. "Did you hear anything about this place there? Do the Japanese intend to come and take possession? It's in their beat, as you might say."

"Naw!—they all laughed when I said I was coming here. This place is a joke to every one 't ever heard of it, and that ain't many. Well, I like odd places myself. I think I'll work down to the Phœnixes after I leave here. Hell of a place, again, no one there; still, I'd like to see 'em. Then I'll work down through Manihiki and the French islands and mebbe make the Zone by summer. Want to come?"

The man was, for all his business talk, a prey to *Wanderlust;* an odd home for a poetic impulse. As for his proposition, it was simply exacerbating. Kit did want to go, violently. It was all terribly disappointing; except for a few blessings in the way of cloth, hardware and tobacco this vessel might as well not have come. For he did not see, considering everything, how he could merely light off and leave the islands to their old condition of war and neglect.

He wrote a letter to the Navy Department, ex-

plaining matters, touching lightly on the fate of Jones and still more lightly on that of Masson. It ended: "If this amounts to desertion, I must take the consequences. I feel that my responsibilities here are paramount, and I must not resign them till I can transfer them to some higher authority." The skipper took the letter and sailed cheerily into the blue. Not a word did Kit ever hear of ship or letter again.

The experience made him wretched, bringing civilization within reach and snatching it away again. He tramped up and down the beaches chewing his nails, scanning the virgin horizon and the jeweled lagoon for the smoke that never fouled them. How long, how long? Was the whole world dead? England, with her octopus navy, her permeating merchant marine, her inexhaustible willingness to succor weak peoples? Japan, the awakening, the dragon-eyed? America, the country of the captain that seized Guam, the country that cleaned the stink-hole of the Philippines?

No, they were merely busy on more important matters. And these islands were worthless. The prizes of the Pacific were by now all known and distributed, and on one was going out of his way by a thousand miles to acquire an unprofitable reef.

Still, some time it must happen. After the war the Germans might come back, and the Allied Powers surely could not allow that. One of them must come; either England, Japan or the United States; possibly France.

He hoped it would be his own country, naturally; he had not forgotten Manila. More than once he had considered taking possession in its name, but always abandoned the idea as unnecessary and unsound, albeit dashing. Governments knew best. He was not

then aware how many enthusiastic explorers, missionaries and castaways had planted their national colors on Pacific islands, only to be publicly ignored and privately cursed by their governments; it was merely a God-given prudence that restrained him.

England was his next choice, then France, then Japan. He hoped it would not be Japan, somehow, though he had nothing definite to offer against her and though she seemed the most probable claimant. She would doubtless come, if she came, by agreement with the other Allies; he would resign in her favor, if it came to that.

V

The last months were vexed with both care and languor. The climate told; he found it impossible to go on working and caring as hard as at home. And things occurred that gave him mind-aches.

As Archbishop of Titipu he had occasion to read the Gospels quite diligently; these were the most serious Scriptural researches he had ever undertaken. Presently he could nôt fail to be struck by one thing: the repeated insistence on chastity and marital faithfulness. Transgressions might be sins of the flesh, and perhaps more easily forgiven than sins of the spirit; but there was no doubt about their being sins.

It was not as though Kit had been merely incontinent. Masson had been bestial and libidinous in the extreme, but in one sense he had retained his virtue. He had not set out to be a Christian Monarch, and at the same time coldly overset Christian principles by taking two legal wives at once.

By the time the northeast trades set in, in November, he came to the conclusion he had been a priceless

fool, and that his polygamous performance constituted the chief blot on the fair escutcheon of his reign. But what then? Throw over a wife? Which? Onauti, and outrage prior claims and the Bond of Parenthood? Or Naouea, and outrage love and the susceptibilities of Tenguiu?

It came to this: Naouea was the one to give up, but he loved her and could not bear to let her go. Love had its claims, as well as the sacred institution of monogamy. That was the real issue; he would have risked trouble with Tenguiu for the sake of mental peace.

This, a matter made on the very model for his type of mind to worry over, formed the subject of interminable outpourings in his diary:

". . . I hate this so. I hate the feeling of being inconsistent. I decide I must decide—I'm sure at times I'm going to, and decide right. I always have decided things, especially here, in this position. And still I don't decide. It's the climate, I suppose.

". . . and anyway, I confess failure. I don't kid myself into thinking that I am consistent and righteous. Is that enough? Awful question! . . ."

Under another date, apparently written in the presence of the desired one: "Naouea—I won't give her up. Perhaps I'll stop loving her—but that wouldn't make me happier or any less *good*. Oh, what is conscience? What is duty, what is love? If I'm a religious person why can't I *be* religious, out and out, and give her up? If I'm a modern, or an agnostic or something of that sort, why can't I be happy though wicked? And why can't the thing be a simple matter of Duty against Pleasure, itself? There's pleasure in obedience to conscience; there's duty in love.

"Naouea, dear child—it would be unspeakably cow-

ardly and brutal to give her up, loving her as I do. But I'm such a bad sinner—no dash, no spontaneity, no I-don't-give-a-hang courage. I *do* give a hang. The thought of setting a wrong example to these people is real pain. It *is* a wrong example . . ."

And so on, over weeks.

VI

A curious little incident in December harried him still further. He was presiding at a Council and a boy rushed in, shouting; he did not fully understand. But without hesitation the entire gathering rose and hurried to the lagoon beach. The men of the village piled into canoes, the women ran about gathering fish nets, all with much talk and bustle.

It transpired that a school of fish resembling a sardine, much prized for eating, had wandered into the lagoon. The idea was to drive the school in shore by a cordon of canoes, directing them into enclosures formed by small coral jetties thrust out in shallow water. Then nets would be stretched across the openings and the fish could be scooped out by waders with nets, hats, mats or anything available. This was done, but it took the greater part of the day. During most of the time Kit sat on the beach, still in his crown and robe, and kicked himself.

"A fine king I am, a damn fine king! I make a big noise when there's nothing doing, and they let me. And then something really important comes up and I don't know as much, and can't be as much use, as a child of three. . . .

"It's all like that. I'm a fake. I haven't done one useful thing since I landed, except swipe a file out of the dory. I couldn't keep the arsenal shut. I couldn't

prevent war. I couldn't end the war, except by killing the only white man in sight. I couldn't teach the natives to trade or make things, or better themselves in any way. I didn't set up church and school till that diddling old Aitaki suggested it. I got myself into a mess by thinking I could have a conscience and two wives as well, and I can't get myself out of it. I'm no good.

"I'm sick of it. Sick of this pretense of being God Almighty. I'm not half the man Etera is. I'm going to resign."

He did not resign. The natives presently drove the fish into the traps and began netting them. Kit threw off his robe and crown, seized a hand net and scooped till his back ached. It was good to feel something ache besides his mind.

VII

He did not resign, but neither did he settle the polygamy affair; that blot remained on his reign up to the very end.

The final act, oddly enough, began under the same circumstances as the fish episode, during a Council. Once more a messenger rushed in, but this time there was no difficulty about understanding him. The words "Te ro!" (Sail ho!) were loud in his mouth, and in a moment the whole village was on the beach.

Up the southern channel, gray and calm and unbelievably powerful looking, steamed a cruiser. Kit gave one glance, and saw from the masts she was not American; what then, British or Japanese? He footed it to the Residenz, got an old rusty German glass and returned. Surely on entering a strange port like this

the vessel would show her colors . . . she did. White; red cross; a little Union Jack in the corner—Nairava was English!

The great thing—she was technically obsolete, but she looked superb—glided majestically up the lagoon and cast anchor. Two boats were lowered from her; the landing party. The islanders began scrambling into boats and putting out to her, but Kit did not join them. This was *really* the end; something more majestic was in order. He still wore his regalia. An idea came to him, and he called loudly for all members of the Guard present to follow him to the Residenz.

Fifteen turned up, enough to make two squads. He gave brief instructions, and waited inside the palings. At length word came from Kakaiwia that the landing party was near. He waited, carefully measuring the time; then started for the beach again, his guard in front of him in file by twos.

(Seven months; it was now early in January. Such as it had been, it was over. So sudden, so tremendous . . .)

Three white figures were stepping from a launch onto the little dock that was Nairava's Liverpool. The column reached the crowd; it parted to let them pass; eyes turned from the newcomers to him. He saw Kakaiwia, and motioned him to his side.

(A fine-looking king! He was shaved, at least; the *Clarissa* had provided a razor. His hair was barbered—but by Naouea! His calves were bare, and there was an oblong of brown chest over his *be* and between the edges of his robe—a pretty figure to greet immaculate British officers!)

The column reached the pier, halted and turned inward to make a lane for Kit, with Kakaiwia at his

side, to walk down. Kit bit his lip and fixed his eye on the first of the officers; three stripes; he would be the gunnery officer, or something of the sort, in charge of the party. Would he salute? He hoped desperately the man would salute. . . .

He walked quickly down the lane. "How do you do?" he said. "I'm very glad to see you. My name is Newell, an American naval officer . . ."

He saw the three astounded pairs of eyes devour him; saw the first officer's jaw drop and his hand slowly rise to the peak of his cap.

". . . I was cast ashore here several months ago, and I've been acting as king. Did you have a pleasant voyage? How is the war? Oh, this is Kakaiwia, our sub-chief . . ."

All right so far, but if they laughed, if they laughed . . . He talked on and on, to keep them from laughing.

But they did not laugh. The leading officer, a tall handsome man in his late thirties, introduced himself as Commander Levinson and his two mates as Tucker and Ames, lieutenant and ensign. "So you're a Yankee, are you? How on earth did you get here? Shipwreck, was it? A regular rajah—jolly little crown, that! I say, this *is* a lark!"

"Perhaps," said Kit dryly, "though that wasn't the original idea."

He disbanded his guard and took the visitors to the Residenz, Levinson firing questions at him. They sat down in the office, the fusillade continuing; Etera brought cocoanut juice and the visitors provided cigarettes, which tasted strange and bitter in Kit's mouth. Cigarettes, out of silver cases!

"Well," said the Briton at length, "this is a yarn for you to tell your grandchildren. Something for

you to think about, Tucker, though not to follow—by Jove, no! Mr. Tucker is going to stay here as Resident for the time being. I say, you must come and see the old man. Not yet, though; we'll go back and tell him first, so that he can make proper arrangements. Twenty-one guns, and all that sort of rot!"

They returned to the ship, leaving Tucker in command of the landing party, whose two divisions were bustling about pitching camp, to the undisguised amusement of the natives. In less than an hour Levinson came back in a launch, to take Kit out to the cruiser.

"Captain Fiske-Dunning presents his compliments to Mr. Newell and requests the pleasure of his company at luncheon," was the message Levinson delivered himself of. Fair enough, but somehow the "Mr. Newell" stuck a little in Kit's throat. Were things going to be a little difficult? And there were no twenty-one guns.

The Captain received them on deck; he was a jolly, plump, pink-faced man. Kit was cheered, and even saluted first, which he had had no idea of doing. The Captain immediately took him into his office, alone, and asked to be told all about it. Kit told him, not hesitating to describe the more important of his mental processes. The Briton, forgetting for the moment that he was a captain of one of His Majesty's ships, responded like a boy to a detective story.

"I say!" he burst out after half an hour. "This is the best yarn I ever heard in my life! Simply topping! Something new in South Sea adventures, what? I never saw any one who had such a sense of form. That crown, now, the last touch! Jolly good, jolly good! And that place up north; all quiet now?"

"Yes. But I had to kill a white man to make it so."

"Quite right, quite right. You were the government, and you had to do it, for the sake of peace. See here, I shall be glad to write a word about that, if I find your story is supported by the natives, as I don't doubt it will be. You might like it to show your people, what? And I say, Mr. Newell, the only reason I didn't give you your twenty-one guns as you came out was because I wanted to find out more about it first. But we'll give them to you—by Jove, yes!"

"Thank you," said Kit, smiling. "I hope you'll give warning first, or the natives will think they're going to be killed."

At lunch, which he took alone with the Captain and the Executive Officer, he took his own turn at asking questions. The war, he learned, was over; the Peace Conference in session and President Wilson in Paris. It had been as he supposed about Nairava; more trouble than it was worth. For long it had not even been known that the Germans had left; now that things were being settled it was of course unthinkable to let them have it again.

"And now," said Kit at last, "will you take me away? And before you take me away, will you take possession?"

"Yes, to be sure. Under mandate."

"What's that?"

"Oh, it's the new way of doing these things. It's the new name for a colony. Your President had something to do with it."

"I'd hoped," Kit said, "that this place would be included with the Crown Colony of the Line Islands. That would seem the most sensible thing to do."

"Exactly; but we don't do the sensible thing any more. We do—excuse me—the democratic thing."

"Oh!" Perhaps Kit did not quite excuse him; perhaps he thought too much about mere words; perhaps he did not realize how much of a little tin god even the best-hearted British captain must be on his own ship. Nothing had been said, he remembered, about taking possession till he himself mentioned it; it was a little like taking things for granted. Well, he was in a position to put on a little "side" himself.

"Very well," he said dryly. "I'll make out my act of abdication, and when you've shown me your credentials we can go before the Councils, and fix it all up."

Captain Fiske-Dunning had no idea how to be indignant, and became rather pathetic in his attempt. His good-natured pudgy face grew red and strained, and he stammered. "What? What's all this? Credentials? Good heavens, sir, do you suppose a British cruiser goes scouring about without orders?"

"Not for a moment," said Kit, smiling.

"Well, I am ordered to put these islands under mandate for Great Britain. You're not going to object, are you?"

"I am not," said Kit. "I've wished you were here every day since I came. But these people have chosen me as their government, and there's a certain form—isn't there?—about putting one government under another. Wouldn't I be treating your government in an irregular—even a somewhat disrespectful—manner if I didn't ask to see the documents? Or are you here under verbal orders?"

The Captain gave a clearing splutter, then laughed. "Right you are, old man, right you are. Jove, I said you had an eye for form!" He went to a desk and after some fumbling produced a piece of paper. "There you are, sir, most irregular, against all orders.

But Whitehall didn't know there was a king involved, what?"

Kit in return offered to lay before him all the documents of his reign, including his own diary, as an earnest of good faith. The Captain was surprised and delighted to learn that he had kept records of everything; drew Kit out on the matter and burst out in new enthusiasm.

"I say, I should like to look over all that! I shall, to-morrow morning, if you'll allow me. And I shall tell Tucker to pay particular attention to all you've done, and carry on in the same way, as far as possible. Laws, what? All drawn up and docketed—one pigeonhole for passed bills and another for unpassed ones? Ha! Topping under-secretary you'd make!"

"*Under*-secretary!" said Kit, laughing. "I've been every secretary in the whole blooming cabinet!"

"So you have, and jolly good ones too, I'm sure. Jolly good, jolly good!"

Arrangements were made; Kit was told that he could have that day and the next for ceremonies and festivities, and they would sail the following evening for Suva. He would have a *ruoio* that night for the visitors, and call a meeting of the two Councils for the next afternoon.

"D'you know," said Fiske-Dunning in a burst of confidence as they parted, "when the fellows first told me there was a Yankee running things here I was no end worried. But now, though I haven't a particle of evidence for your good intentions, beyond your bare word, I'm perfectly sure that you're one of the best, and have done as well here as any man possibly could, and a damned sight better than most. I'm proud to have met you, Mr. Newell—I would say, Your Majesty!"

VIII

Once more Kit lay on the lagoon beach and listened to the enchanting rhythms of the *ruoio*. Venus flared transiently over Naituvi, Canopus blazed to the left. The northeast trades filtered coolly through the palm trees.

Sweetly, sweetly rose and fell the fountains of his thought. He had ruled seven hundred people for seven months, and had not done it badly. Perhaps it was opportunity's favor, the familiar one of war and divided leadership; he had used opportunity and had not shirked. He had not become drunk with fortune and power; he had not made a fool of himself. And now it was over. He forgot polygamy, forgot sardines; the task was finished, and he might go.

Sirius beamed on him from on high, almost in the zenith—what a suddenly odd place for it to be! Sirius was the greatest of all the stars . . . was Sirius therefore the servant of heaven? . . . *Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*

The happy stars filled his eyes, the *ruoio* his ears. Slow, faster; slower, but not so slow as before; faster, faster than before, always faster, as a breaker gathers height:

Tum—tum—tata, tum—tum—tata . . .
Tum tum tatata, tum tum tatata . . .
Tum, tatata tum tum, tatata tum tum . . .
Tatata tum, tatata tum

and at last the final breathless

Tata tum tata tum tata tum tata tum tata tum,

deliriously fast and insistent. His mind cast off from its moorings of thought and joined his senses, drifting on the absolute of beauty and content. . . .

"I say," Dunning's voice cut across it all, close to his ear; "I say—you don't mind my talking now? See here, wouldn't you like to carry on here, as you are? I can arrange it with Suva, I think, and when Whitehall finds what you've done they'll almost certainly ratify you as Commissioner or Resident or something. They're jolly glad to keep on a man that's got the hang of a place, usually. And you keep your little raj, and your crown and all, and have no end of a time, what? Well, how does it strike you? What do you say?"

Kit smiled and slowly shook his head. "Thanks a lot, sir. It's awfully kind of you. But I couldn't stay on here now. It isn't a white man's job."

"Some white man'll have to do it."

"I know—excuse me—but it isn't my job. It has been, but it's finished now. To stay on would be—I don't know—pretending. And I've got other things to do."

"The Government would let you keep your title and all, I can almost promise you. And you'd have no trouble with them—they're pretty good fellows in Whitehall."

"I'm sure they are, but—I can't. Thanks no end, but I simply can't."

Dunning sank back on his mat. Kit returned to the stars, but their brightness was dimmed. What he had said was so, and he would not take it back; but he had given pledges to the future. He had undertaken to make it better than the past. The *ruoio* surged over him again, but its magic was broken.

IX

KINGDOM OF NAIRAVA AND TENGUIU

Know all men by these presents that I, Christopher Newell, of New York City, Ensign, U. S. N., having been cast ashore on the island of Nairava from U. S. S. *Nashua* on June 2, 1918;

And having been kindly entreated by the inhabitants of said island, and asked by them, in the absence of their former possessor, Germany, and of any responsible foreign power, to assume the office and duties of king among them;

And having in accordance with their wish acted, under the name of Nuei, as their king from June 7, 1918, till this date, and from June 27 as King of Tenguiu also;

Now I, Christopher Newell, in pursuance of the intentions with which I assumed these offices, and with the consent and approval of the Councils of these Islands, hereby resign my office of King of both these Islands into the hands of Edmund Newton Fiske-Dunning, Captain, R. N., as agent and representative for the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, on the understanding that these Islands are to be held under mandate by the said Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until such time as other arrangements may be made, with the consent of all concerned.

To this my hand and seal, and those of the Councils of Nairava and Tenguiu, on this ninth day of January, 1919.

NUEI R

KAKAIWIA,	ONGONG,
MWAI,	KIWEUE,
ITIBWI,	TUIOVI,
ORIVEVE,	KOMAMAII,
KURIA,	NGABA,
TETIKUTAIO,	AEAE,
For the Council of Nairava.	For the Council of Tenguiu.

To this my hand and seal, as undertaking for Great Britain

the above obligations, and to promote the welfare of the people of Nairava and Tenguiu.

E. N. Fiske-Dunning,
Captain, R. N.,
Temporary Deputy High Commissioner
of the Western Pacific.

This remarkable document was executed at the joint council meeting next morning, a grand and solemn affair. Fully half the population of the two islands was present, the chiefs squatting in a ring in the center of the main *maniaba,* the King and the British officers, their white uniforms showing up starkly in the dim place, seated on all the chairs the Residenz contained.

Fiske-Dunning's addendum or codicil was his own idea, written by himself in longhand on the spur of the moment, in an outburst of good-heartedness. Kit thanked him, in the name of his late subjects as well as himself, deeply touched. When every one had signed he affixed his own last signature; then amid a complete silence he stood up and gave his farewell speech. It was short and intended to be cheerful, almost confined to good wishes and high hopes. At its end he solemnly removed his crown and robe and placed them on the ground before him. He stood facing the assembly in his *be* and slippers.

"I ask," he said, "that I may be allowed to take with me this crown and this robe, emblems of the power I have tried to use well, so that when I am unhappy I may look at them and remember happiness." He repeated this in English. "By all means, by all means," said the captain, nodding cordially. Kit picked them up and held them for a moment, priming himself for the last word. Suddenly in the poignant silence a woman wailed. It was a horrible sound,

it rent the heart-strings. It was too much. Kit turned and fled from the place.

A few hours later he walked out of the Residenz clad in immaculate whites lent him by a British junior, with the insignia carefully removed. His wives and others walked with him, bearing sacks containing his own disreputable uniform, his crown and robe, his papers, some native toys and manufactures and a collection of sea shells. There was a crowd at the landing, centered on Tucker and the bluejackets who were staying with him. Kit shook hands with them and wished them well; then he turned to kiss his wives.

(Naouea—he was giving her up! And he had hardly thought of it; he was so full of plans and removals that he had forgotten love. Love! . . . Well, it *had* been love, hadn't it?)

Kakaiwia was there, weeping frank tears. He kissed his sovereign, and wailed like a woman. Others came up, doing the same, Etera, Aitaki, Itibwi, Ongong; the sound of lamentation increased, it swelled, it rose to an awful fullness. The thing became a torment.

It must have seemed funny to the Englishmen, but they behaved perfectly. Not a smile crossed their lips as they stood watching the swarming natives, their eyes screwed up and their mouths open in the spontaneity of grief, as they pawed at Kit, kissed him and bellowed. And it was so hot, and there were so many of them, and they smelt so of cocoanut oil, and his eyes would smart so . . .

He broke away at last, sprang into the boat. He sat in the stern seat as the launch slowly backed, and saw the dock and beach lined with brown figures as on that first morning. Their ululations continued, they stretched out their arms to him, they waded out

in the water, wailing. "Nuei, Nuei! Come back, Nuei! Nuei, Nuei, alas!"

The boat swung round; he could no longer see them, but he could hear them. Their voices tore at his heart, and tears streamed from his eyes. Fiske-Dunning sat by him, oblivious, in perfect tact. Then, as the voices grew dimmer and the gas engine louder, he felt the captain's hand on his knee.

"I say, you can go back now, if you like," came the easy English tones. "It isn't too late. What do you say? What?"

Kit looked at him, his face still wet, and smiled. "Thank you, sir, it's very kind of you," he said, "but I can't do that. I can't, I can't go back."

Part III

CHRISTOPHER

CHAPTER XI

I

ONE warm afternoon in late March Kit walked up the steps of his aunt's house in West Eighth Street and rang the bell. His taxicab was puffing hotly at the curb, and its pulsations were echoed in his own thorax. It isn't every day that one returns home from the Jaws of Death.

The event was not spectacular. A maid in black and white opened the door, said that Miss Fairborn was expecting him and received his bags from the cabman. She showed Kit into the drawing room, said that her mistress would be down in a few moments, and disappeared. There was a tea table all ready for business, except for the kettle; Kit stared at it. He might have been the most casual caller, a total stranger.

After a few minutes there was a rustle in the hall and Aunt Emmy bounced in, a little plumper, a little grayer than when he had last seen her, but not really different and certainly no less effusive. Her mouth felt peculiarly soft and sweet under Kit's.

"*Dear* boy, how glad I am to see you! Such a time —good gracious, you don't know *half* what I've been through! First that awful Navy Department telegram, and I couldn't make up my mind whether to wear mourning or not, and every one so sorry, and I not knowing even whether to have a funeral and— Sit down, dear, we'll have tea. CatherINE!! All

right—bring the kettle! I've ordered English muffins. And then, like a bolt from the blue, your *dear* wire, and another from Washington, and it was all so lovely and I was *so* delighted I'd been firm about not wearing black. But your dear mother—I don't know whether to be glad or sorry on her account, but—ah, here's the kettle. I'm not at home, Catherine. Now tell me all about it, dear. How well you're looking. In uniform still? Did you save some clothes?"

"Not a stitch, except what I wore," said Kit. "I had this made in Honolulu—"

"Oh, of *course*—did you see the Blakeslees out there? And Jenny Graham—she married a man by the name of . . . There, it's boiling; I'll make the tea. What *was* her name? I hope those muffins are hot. Now tell me *all* about it, dear! By the way, would you like to go to a concert to-night? Rachmaninoff. No one ever played so loud or fast. Because I've got a ticket, in case—"

"Love to."

"I didn't know but you have so many friends to see—"

"They can wait. What about the lady in Honolulu?"

"Oh, Carter, Carswell, Cramer . . . Huntington, that was it! Let's see, how do you take it? Two lumps and cream—fancy my having forgotten! By the way, do you like my new sugar bowl? It's real Queen Anne, much more than I could afford, and I'm looking for a pair of tongs to match it . . ."

Kit liked this staccato exchange of irrelevant nothings; it was all so festive and foolish. After ten minutes the bell rang; Kit anticipated no interruption, owing to his aunt's order, but all at once Mary Vane stood in the door.

"I'm so sorry—I wouldn't have *dreamed,* only Catherine said nothing—"

"But come in! Sit down! Delighted to see you!" from Kit and his aunt simultaneously, and the girl advanced into the room.

He had not thought of her for years, but he remembered her very well now. She wore the same dark and tight-fitting clothes; she had the same dark restless eyes and accommodating smile; her voice was cool and deep, as before. She took a cup of tea; Kit was given a second; Aunt Emmy's inconsecutive flow was subdued under a quiet exchange of question and answer between the girl and Kit.

She was not living in the house any more, it seemed, but in a studio near by. She had been engaged in war work for nearly two years, but had now resumed her studying for the concert stage. "And when do you make your début?" asked Kit. "Oh, that's forever in the air," she said agreeably, but it seemed as though the thought were disagreeable, underneath. "Sometimes I think piano playing for the public isn't all it's cracked up to be. However, that's dull. I want to hear about you. Go on just where you left off, please."

Aunt Emmy also turned to him, and he was a trifle embarrassed. "Well, we really weren't anywhere, just all over the place. I got a lift to Suva on the British cruiser, and they treated me delightfully. I stayed a while in Suva—in Fiji, you know; did some telegraphing and got a few clothes; then caught a steamer to Honolulu. There I had to wait some time for a passage; boats terribly crowded just now. Lots of fellows are working their passage, because it's the quickest way. However, I didn't see any use in that, so I just stayed in Honolulu and had a wonderful time.

Then I came directly on to Washington, as I was ordered to report there. I talked to all sorts of people, way up ever so high, and they were all very kind and interested. I couldn't find out much about what went on on the *Nashua,* except that she put in next at Pagopago, and the captain is supposed to be slightly gaga, but not quite gaga enough to fire. Then they told me it would be all right about . . . about my discharge! I'm out of the Navy now, a free man."

"But what about the other, before?" asked Mary Vane. "About being cast away, and being king, and all that?"

"Yes!" said Aunt Emmy with a little scream. "About being king!"

"Oh, that's such ancient history! There's really nothing, beyond what I gave the newspaper men at San Francisco and Washington. I do hope they'll leave me alone now. It all sounds very romantic and picturesque, I dare say, but at the time it was all just —just business-like, and practical."

"Shipwreck!" said Mary Vane, her eyes stirring. "Only it wasn't quite that, was it? I won't ask you about that. It—well, it was just one of those things, I suppose. We must use our imaginations, Aunt Em."

"Yes!" said Aunt Emmy, brightening visibly. "We must. Mary dear, Kit says he'll go with us to-night, so why don't you stay here and dine? You needn't change . . ."

The two women took up the conversation, and Kit listened, fascinated by their gay miscellaneous jabber. It was just what he wanted, feminine, inconsecutive, civilized. He had a third cup of tea, so as to have a better excuse for listening.

"By the way," said Aunt Emmy presently, on one of her sudden tangents, "the Hoffington boy is much bet-

ter. He got wounded, you know—or was it gassed? And he got the Croix de Guerre, and he's all right, only a little pale and nervous. I just saw Mrs. Hoffington day before yesterday. She mentioned that friend of yours, Jack—what was the name? So sad about him . . ."

The world concentrated into sudden silence, and the silence into a knife-point in Kit's heart. His tea cup trembled; brown little rings formed in it, then faded. "Jack Caslon. Yes?"

He could not lift his eyes from his cup, but he felt Aunt Emmy staring at him in sudden horror. "Yes. What is it?" His voice sounded even, but the words were like stones in his throat. "I've heard nothing."

"Of course, I forgot. I was thinking—Washington—foolish of me . . ." Her voice died hopelessly.

"What is it," he demanded once more, not able to lift his voice to a question.

"Why, he was in the Air Squadron, with the English, I think. I really don't know much—I just heard incidentally, months ago . . ."

"He was killed," said Kit.

No sound. Brown rings in the tea cup; then the opaque glassy surface again.

"Mary dear," said Aunt Emmy, "won't you play something? You haven't played for a week."

Mary Vane promptly got up, opened the piano and played.

He could put down his tea cup now. He sat back, under cover of the music, his clammy hands clenched in his lap; he could just manage, with the music going on. And the music went on, on and on, without stopping. But he could not do without it—he must not think, not yet, not yet . . .

"Mr. Newell," sounded a voice. He glanced up,

saw Aunt Emmy dozing in her deep chair and Miss Vane's head half turned toward him as she played. "Mr. Newell!" the voice repeated, low and insistent.

He went to the piano. The girl spoke, without stopping her swift hands or raising her eyes from the keys.

"See here, why don't you go up to the Yale Club, and find out? She knows nothing, except he was killed, about September, and you can learn more there. Lots of people are back. I'll make it all right with your aunt; you needn't bother about dinner or the concert or anything. Have you got a latch key? Catherine will give you one."

"Thank you," said Kit hoarsely. "Yes, I think I will. I shan't need a key—back early." He caught up his cap in the hall and flung himself into the street.

II

He took a bus at the corner of Eighth Street and, as it was a warm evening, went on top. He paid his fare, covered his face with his hand, and when he looked up again Madison Square stretched on his right.

He wondered why they didn't have those purple lamps any more. It used to be beautiful to see the double chain of them swinging up and down the grades in the dusk. The majestic street, its surfaces softly glimmering in the mixed lights, swirled coldly by him. On passing the Public Library he felt tears on his cheeks, and knew why they were there. So often, during the past year, he had looked forward to his first entrance into the Yale Club after the war. . . .

The bright lights of the place blinded him. Rafts of men were lounging about, half of them in uniform;

no one he knew or cared about. Upstairs; no one. Oh, but he must look, he must make an effort, he must, he *must*.

In the course of a thorough search he soon discovered Jennings Cobb in the uniform of a first lieutenant of artillery. Jen's face lit up; he wrenched Kit's hand and thumped his shoulder; others came up and were introduced or greeted; festive questions about Nairava and shipwreck began to flow.

"Let's get away," said Kit thickly. "I must see you alone."

"All right. Having dinner here? Let's go up, then; it's not too early."

They broke away and went to the elevator. Jen understood, that was plain; the break from the group had been sharp, barely decent. But Kit sat through a whole dinner, talking mechanically about the Peace Conference, Nairava, the artillery and indifferent people before he could bring himself to say: "Now then, tell me. I must know."

Jennings flicked his cigarette into his coffee cup and eyed him nervously. "You've heard nothing, then?"

"Only that he was killed. My aunt just told me."

Jennings looked down the long bright room. He had a plain, lean, intelligent face with nondescript coloring; his eyes were soft and full of kindness. "Well, there's not an awful lot to tell. He finished his training in England and went out with an English squadron, as a lot did. The squadron was flying Bristol Fighters, two-seated things, very fast and powerful, used for fighting only. He was out about three weeks, and had brought down at least one Hun. He was all right, you know, everything fine. I got a letter written about a week before—I'll show it to you if you'll come round to my room."

"Yes," said Kit. "Go on."

"Well, he and his observer simply went up on a morning patrol, and flew out of sight. Half an hour later a machine was seen falling, with both wings broken. The thing landed several miles away from the airdrome, just behind the English lines. It was ten feet deep in the ground. . . . I haven't heard, but I suppose—hardly recognizable. But it wasn't such a hard death. They say . . ."

He took a drink of water, and went on with a steady voice: "They say he turned his engine full on as he dove. He probably reached the highest speed ever attained by a man. And I guess he was out of it long before he struck—I understand you don't live long, falling like that—not falling, *racing* . . ."

"And was it a German, or just an accident?"

"No one saw another machine, but they think it couldn't have been an accident. Bristols don't lose their wings like that; they must have been shot off. Oh, it was a real death."

Waiters bustled about them, clattering plates. The elevator doors opened periodically, emitting small groups of men talking and laughing together as they made their way to tables; others strayed out similarly, having finished. Kit sat with eyes glued on the tablecloth.

"Of course," came Jen's voice, calm and rather beautiful and plainly fortified by his Catholic faith, "there's nothing to regret, really. It was all it could have been, as a death. And as a life. It doesn't do to be too sorry."

Kit stirred. "I told myself that when my mother died, and it worked. Now, it doesn't, somehow. It —doesn't . . ."

"Let's go," said Jen. He led the way to the ele-

vator and out of the building, to a room in the east Forties. He unbuttoned and threw off his army blouse, offered cigarettes and presently took a letter from a table drawer. It was dated September 17, 1918.

THE FRONT.

DEAR JEN:

All goes well. Been out a fortnight and up every day; gorgeous weather, though beginning to get cold. The Fighters are wonders, and doing great work. Things looking up, scarcely a Hun in sight, except in Circuses; on the run pretty steadily, as I suppose with you. But I've got one of the bitches to my credit, D. V.!—I mean, thank God.

Sorry not to have seen you in England, but I'm glad you saw George Robey. Fairish, what? Pretty putrid lot of shows all season, though; *Nurse Benson* was about the best thing I saw. The Russians were dancing at one of the Halls, but I didn't get to them.

Poor old Kit—Oh Jen, I cried all night after your letter. Of course out here one tries not to think much about it and one gets hardened, but this, it won't out. To be thrown away like that, on a useless silly business—just coldly chucked away, as you tear up a one-cent circular without even opening the envelope. I don't know how far that captain was to blame, but if he was— It's too awful to write about. It's a hole in one, that will never be filled, or stop aching.

Lord knows when I'll see you; we don't get to Paris. I shall take my first leave in England, but eventually I'll be transferred to the A.E.F., and then what ho!

Ever yours, old thing,

JACK.

Kit leaned forward, put his hands over his face and sobbed and sobbed. His chest rose and fell in long convulsive heaves; the hot tears trickled through his fingers; his head was bursting. This went on for

minutes, then gradually subsided. When he looked up, Jen was leaning back in a morris chair, wiping his eyes.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Kit, dropping his head in his hands again. "Oh, *Lord!*"

"Better to have it out," said Jen.

Kit stopped crying, went to a stationary washstand in one corner of the room, bathed his face and took a glass of water. He sat down again, able to talk, in sudden need of talking.

"Of course if there's one thing that could have made it worse, it's knowing that he felt that way—*this* way —about me. Because there's no use in modesty; I know he was as fond of me as I was of him. Oh, Jen, what a personality he had! What a brain!"

Jen's eyes, though still warm with sympathy, took on a certain intellectual detachment. "Wait—better get it straight. As for brains, there were many as good and some better. As for personality, he had great weaknesses. You simply *liked* him. Not that that makes it any easier, of course."

"Yes, you're right. It was just *him* that I loved."

"I was pretty cut up myself," continued Jen. "We were on the *Lit.* together, and good friends before that. But I know it's a lot harder for you. Do you know, there was something quite unusual about your friendship. It wasn't the ordinary college affair, at all. You wouldn't have cared half as much if any of the rest of us had been killed. It was what you were able to do for him that made you love him— that extraordinary psychological kink that—"

Kit did not follow him; he had got up and was walking about the room. "That's just it—why it had to be he that died, out of all the others. Oh, Jen, I'd have felt badly enough to lose you, but I can't

pretend that I ever felt about any one as I did about him. Why the best thing—the one really good thing in my life—had to be destroyed—can you explain it? Why couldn't we both have died? I was so near it once; just the barest chance saved me. Oh, God! God . . . Why do people say there's no God? Of course there is. No accident, nothing but a God could have arranged this. A cruel, malicious God—"

"Come, buck up," interrupted Jen with some sharpness. "The fool that said in his heart there is no God was just a fool. He didn't say there was a bad one."

"Oh, but Jen, how's one to believe anything else? What's God for, if not to preserve the fine and good and *godlike* in us? Why does He let us down this way? That's it—stand back, let the good go under and the wicked prosper—"

His voice, that had risen to a shrill note, like a child's, stopped in mid-air. He remembered Jen's faith, and knew that he must be hurting him. "I'm sorry, Jen. I know this must sound awful to you. I don't know that I fully believe it myself, but—"

Jen had risen, and put his arm over Kit's shoulders. "No, no!" he said hoarsely. "Of course you don't!"

Kit was struck by the feeling in his voice; knew at once that it was a deep and real thing, no mere echo from priests and popes, and warmed to it. "Thanks, Jen," he blurted obliquely, taking Jen's free hand. "You mean, I—I don't know what you mean, but thanks all the same."

He sank down in the chair again, covering his face. Presently he looked up again and spoke, quietly but with horrible bitterness.

"Whatever it is, though, whoever did it or didn't do it, I say it's damnable. I *needed* him. Nothing

gave me what he gave, or ever will again. The best thing I had is spoiled, broken. I'll never have it again."

Nairava, and all it meant, might not have existed in the cruelty of this discovery. For it seemed to him that death was more than an indeterminate parting; it was more like a disfigurement. For two years he had not seen Jack; for days he had not thought of him; yet still he had been happy, though loving him. He had been happy until to-day, though Jack was six months dead. The ignorance of it, the helplessness! It was a foulness, a degradation to human love.

He shivered, then stood up, feeling cold and lax all over. "Well, I must go, Jen. I have no key, and they'll be waiting up for me. I want to see you, a lot, and I don't want to see any one else, yet. Meet me for lunch to-morrow, will you?"

He was out of the house, walking through the steely streets. And then, as if the thing had not been cruel and bitter enough already, his tears began to flow again. He wiped them away; they recurred; he walked down Fifth Avenue with his face streaming. Near Forty-second Street there were people, and he felt he had to try to appear nonchalant about it, pretend it was the wind. Below that there were fewer people to notice, and he let the senseless things stream on.

III

He slept ten hours, but awoke tired and purposeless, unable to fix his mind on anything, even the ordering of clothes. He stayed in the house till lunch time, then went out and met Jen at a restaurant. He wanted to talk about Jack, but it was difficult, at noonday, in

cold blood, and Jen was interested in a job in an exporting firm that he hoped to get. He was in civilian clothes to-day, and had the air of having put the war behind him. Kit, finding little comfort in him, returned listlessly to Eighth Street.

He found his aunt about to get into the antiquated but somehow vaguely smart victoria that she still kept. She asked him to drive with her and he went, diverting himself with the vacuity of it, sitting with hands crossed on the laprobe, observing the Victory Arch, the green grass in the Park, passing acquaintances. He told his aunt that he was more upset than he had been in his life, and she must be merciful. He talked about getting into his own house, which he supposed he must do. But it was such an effort: cleaning to arrange for, servants to engage; old Nevins was dead and the place entirely empty.

They dined alone, and sat afterward in the rich miscellaneous drawing-room, Miss Fairborn apprehensively solicitous, Kit merely inert. His eye wandered over the incongruous mixture of good things that he remembered from of old: the American highboy, an old family piece; a pair of James I chairs, stiff and stately; the Adam fireplace and grate, with the "authentic" Giovanni di Pietro above; the case of carved ivories; the Flemish tapestry against which he had leaned that day when Mary Vane played.

"I wish that Vane girl was here," he mused idly. "I'd sort of like to hear her play again."

"No doubt she would, if you went and asked her," said his aunt. "She lives just round the corner, in Washington Mews. Why don't you?"

Liking the idea, he went; found the place, a reclaimed stable; knocked at a door on the second story. A voice said "Come in"; he opened the door and

found a large dark room with Mary Vane writing under one harsh metal-shaded light. "Hello," she said, looking up.

Kit made his request and she assented with scarcely a word; slammed a hat on her head and went out with him. Aunt Emmy composed herself for slumber in her wing chair; Mary Vane sat down at the piano and fumbled at a pile of dusty music.

"I remember hearing you play here before, years ago," said Kit. "Something of Schumann, wasn't it?"

"Oh, yes, the Fantaisie! I played the last two movements."

"I don't know. I liked it."

"You like Schumann? Do you know the *Davidsbündlertänze?*"

"Heavens, no—I'm not musical. You mustn't get that idea into your head."

"Well, I'll play them anyway, if you don't mind. I've just discovered them, and I'm crazy about them. Apparently the Davidsbündler were a sort of imaginary club against the Philistines, and these were their dances. They have lots of pep and variety."

Kit drew up a chair and watched her. He liked the things; some of them had a fine idea of tune, quite within his comprehension. "That's nice," he said when she finished. "I like that last one. What's that printing at the top?"

He bent over the page and read: *"Ganz zum Ueberfluss meinte Eusebius noch folgendes; dabei aber sprach viel Seligkeit aus seinen Augen."*

"What does that mean?" asked the girl. "I've always wondered. Do you know German?"

"At the very last, Eusebius thought also the following; at the same time great blessedness spoke from his eyes," translated Kit slowly.

They looked at each other, baffled. "What on earth does that mean?"

"Search me."

"Oh, well, Schumann probably wasn't too sure himself. He was mad half the time."

"Possibly," said Kit. "But you played it as if you knew."

At half past ten or so he walked back with her. He paused as they reached her door, and she turned on the step.

"I want to thank you," said Kit, "for what you did last night. It was just the thing. I went up and saw a fellow, and got the worst of it over."

"I'm glad," said Mary Vane gravely. "I lost a friend myself once, when I was sixteen. I know what it can be."

"It was—well, it isn't over yet, of course. Our friendship was rather an unusual one. It—this—takes the meaning out of so much in life. Out there, on the island, things were continually coming up that I was going to talk over with him, and laugh about. It seems—as though they couldn't properly have *happened,* now. It's—it's just flattening."

There was a brief iron railing on the steps; Mary Vane leaned on this and looked at him through the dim lamplight, motionless. "Exactly," she said.

"And this was to have been—ought to have been—such a wonderful time. Coming back, taking up the old life, starting out on the new. And remembering Nairava, the adventure, the picturesqueness of it. It's all gone. I can't look ahead. I can't even remember."

"I know," said the girl.

"And there's no one, simply no one, that can grow into the same place. I suppose I was wrong, putting

so much into one friendship. But how could I help it? It just came."

"Maud Hoffington told me something of it," said Mary Vane. "We thought, when we heard of his death, how nice it would be for you both. And this —it does seem a sour-tasting thing, a sort of mean trick."

"Yes. It shakes one's faith. But I suppose that passes, too. I said all sorts of wild things last night that I wouldn't repeat now, already. But the cruel thing is this: when I've learned to bear it, and begin to forget, where does that take me? Just further away from something good. . . ."

His voice died in bitterness on the night air; the two stood, helpless and hopeless, for perhaps ten seconds. Then Mary Vane, running her hand round the brass knob at the foot of the railing, said: "There's one thing I wanted to speak about, my calling your aunt 'Aunt Emmy.' She asked me to, some time ago; we've been very intimate, and it seemed the thing. But it occurred to me that you very easily mightn't like it, she being your nearest relative now."

"Heavens, no," said Kit. "Of course you must call her that. I'm delighted you're so thick with her."

The girl flung her head to the stars. "Well, Lord knows what I'd have done, without her. Only the need of independence, and not wanting to sponge . . . However, that's dull. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Mary. You'll play again, some time?"

"Yes, indeed. Glad you liked it."

IV

The days frittered themselves away. Gradually he bestirred himself, ordered clothes, went about and

saw people, had his house opened and cleaned. He determined to put it in order throughout and live there, with a full staff of servants, "for the present." For the future, who could ever say? He could not even think.

At the end of a fortnight he installed himself. He was never alone, for there was a constant stream of friends in town, either looking for jobs or taking a fling of pleasure after their months of durance, who were more than glad to spend a few days or even weeks with him. He laid in a large supply of liquor against prohibition and "entertained." He bought a car, a low gray runabout, and took trips into the quickening country. These sometimes had definite goals in the shape of friends' houses, or road houses, and led to much drinking and dancing.

He had never known anything like the state of mind people were in, the feverish search for gayety, the general sense of abandon. People who had never stumbled before the war, even people whose virtue had survived months in the A.E.F., succumbed without a scruple. Jennings Cobb, formerly as straight-laced a young person as one could find, had yielded, and took little pains to conceal the fact; at the same time he retained an essence of mental chastity, or at least of orthodoxy, thoroughly characteristic though hard to justify. Others, unsupported by religious training, fell more indiscriminately, deviously, incredibly. The wreckage of virtue cluttered the air.

Kit, first shocked, then indifferent, began to participate, in a distant and impersonal way, chiefly because this seemed to be the new vehicle of social intercourse. More than once, in the course of a miscellaneous evening, he lost the power of directing his actions and thoughts and, without ever being drunk,

in any strict sense of the word, sustained the inhibition of a number of inhibitions. There was one unbelievable session in a Broadway hotel, composed of two women and a wildly assorted group of men: Flash Merwin (Jen Cobb's former roommate and an ex-private in the Signal Corps), two or three other classmates, a middle-aged, heavy-mustached New York man-about-town, two junior Marine officers picked up out of nowhere. It should, next morning, have been hard to believe that God was in his Heaven; but it wasn't. Or rather, the thought seemed too irrelevant to bother about.

"It's a phenomenon of war," Jen replied to one of Kit's comments on this affair. "You had it after Waterloo—you had it *during* Waterloo. Think of the Duchess of Richmond's ball."

"Why on earth should I bother about the Duchess of Richmond's ball?" said Kit pettishly. "What I ought to bother about is Flash Merwin making a hyena of himself, and I can't get up the steam for that. Neither can you, apparently, with all your piety and wit."

"No," said Jen, "I can't. I suppose that's why I prefer to think about the Duchess of Richmond's ball. I want to be soothed, and diverted. That's what we all want. And hang it, why wouldn't we, after what we've been through?"

V

There was Maud Hoffington to be seen about. He thought exasperatedly over it for some time, and then decided to call about five in the afternoon every day till he found her in. He would not make an appointment by telephone, as that would be misleading, and

he would not leave cards in case he found her out, as that would be brutal.

He found her in the second time of calling. She was pouring tea for some friends of her mother's in an absurdly perfect Louis Quinze drawing room. The faded tans and pinks and greens of the Aubusson rug were skillfully echoed in the tapestries and hangings, and everything in the room, to the very wall panels, to the very parquet, designed in an elaborate pattern, was old and out of France. Hundreds of thousands must have been spent to provide a place for the bored Maud to pour tea for her mother's bored friends in.

She was very cordial, giving the effect of remaining noncommittal only by an effort. Presently she abandoned the tea table and took him off to the library, the very room where, in an expansive moment, he had made pledges for this moment. And he had no idea of fulfilling them, not the slightest.

They talked about the war and Dick's gas and social events and the kingship of Nairava and Tenguiu. He could assume a certain levity about that now. "Yes," he said, "it's a funny feeling, being a king, and I don't know as I've got over it yet. And having queens—I was married, you know. Twice."

(There, was that enough for her?)

"You don't mean it!" said Maudie, with rather hectic enthusiasm, the telltale pink supplanting her shell color. "Tell me about them. Were they very attractive?"

"Oh, yes, only . . ." (He must be careful here; a false step would mean ruin.) "Only that was so secondary, sort of. There were more important things to think about. There generally are, don't you find?"

(Was that enough?)

Maudie sat staring at the floor; she could not move

forward, but she was standing firm. Poor little thing, if she were really disappointed! But there was no kindness except in cruelty.

"And then," he went on, "there was this business about Jack. I suppose that's why I haven't been around to see you before. I just haven't been able to take an interest in anything. You see, I put—I *gave* more to Jack than I ever have to any one. That being wiped out leaves me feeling sort of lost, without anything more to give. I—I can't bear to think of any one, or think of thinking of any one, as I thought of him."

(There, would that do? It would have to.)

He rose and held out his hand. "Good-by, Maudie. It's awfully nice to see you again. I'm opening my house, and I suppose after a while I'll be giving some parties. Will you come—properly chaperoned, of course?"

She stood biting her lip; he could not be sure whether it was a real blow or not, but he felt sure that she would play up, in any case. "Yes, indeed, I'd love to. Good-by, Kit. I'm so glad you're back."

Not "Call me up soon," or "Lunch with us tomorrow," or any of the normal, forward-looking things of old. Yes, she understood, poor child. And he knew that, whether it was a blow or not, he could have taken her up where he had left her.

"Well, it's the only way," he told himself between clenched teeth as he walked down the Avenue. "Nothing else would have done, with the best intentions in the world. Small kindness to Maud in giving her a corpse.—Small kindness or joy to any one, in this world."

VI

Every one seemed miserable, even those who were amusing themselves the hardest, but that was no reason for not amusing one's self. Soon after opening his house he got up a dinner party for a dozen or so of his more intimate friends. He called it a bachelor party because, as he grimly said, it announced his intention of remaining a bachelor for life. There was a new butler and plenty of champagne and cards and chips and—a last sudden thought—a small roulette wheel; and that was more than enough to make a party in the spring of '19.

They drank his health, Jen Cobb giving it felicitously as King of Nairava. He knew how much Kit, in a gathering of this sort, must be thinking of Jack, and for that reason, in order to strike a pleasant note, he dwelt rather strongly on Nairava. He was adept at such things, and soon had the group bubbling with laughter. The health was drunk amid cheers; some one extemporized a song, in which all joined: "Old King Kit was a jolly old wit, and a brace of wives had he . . ."

"To the wives!" cried Flash Merwin, his bright eyes sparkling. "The Queens, God bless them!"

"To the Princes and Princesses!" shouted some one else. "Many of them—or reason to have been!"

That went all right, not transgressing the bounds of harmless fun. But when they sat down again Dick Hoffington, looking neither pale nor nervous, got the floor; he stood swinging his glass, with a hard shine in his eyes, and spoke elaborately.

"Gentlemen, I think we're taking all this rather lightly. There's a serious side to everything, being a king as well as anything else. Especially, I may say,

being a white king in a nation of blacks. A king, such a king, has tremendous duties to his subjects, more particularly to one half of them, the female half. But what about the other half? Poor fellows, they gave their all! By which I mean they gave their women. Gentlemen, for the next toast I propose those unfortunate men, the husbands of King Newell's island, often deceived and always deserted—but they also served their king!"

It was not very funny, and it was going too far. Resentment clamored in Kit; it was all very well for these people to think of those months of labor and effort as being consumed in pleasure, but not as being consumed in communal bestiality. It was—well, it was damnably unfair to Naouea, for one thing.

"Wait!" he cried sharply, as the glasses went up amid rather perfunctory laughter. "I don't like that toast! Our friend means well, but he doesn't know the facts."

Eyes turned on him in surprise and some relief; Dick Hoffington drawled, reddening: "Why, what's the matter? Don't mind a little fun, do you?"

"No," said Kit, eyeing him dispassionately. "But you overestimate my attractiveness to the sex. In simple modesty, I can't allow it."

That was by way of letting Dick down easily, a thing he was quite willing to do if Dick would go. He did, without any display of resentment. The merriment sustained a cooling; recovered, and was in full swing again when they left the dining room.

The card tables were laid out in the drawing room, where there was also a piano. Songs were crashed out, the company joining in from their poker or roulette; a table bearing drinks in one corner was steadily, but not too steadily, patronized. Everybody

was having a good time, and it seemed wholly needless and rather rude when Dick Hoffington, sweeping twenty dollars off the roulette table, yawned and called out: "Whee! This is getting dull. What do you say we move on to one of the cafés? Or bring a few Janes in here and dance? What do you say, Newell?"

Newell gave him a casual smile over his shoulder and called for two cards. He knew that Dick was drunker than he showed.

"Newell don't care for women," said Len Thomson. "How about a little bridge? Come on, Dick, you and I'll stand anybody."

"The hell he don't," said Dick. "Aw, not bridge, too slow. No, old man Newell, old Post Newell. . . . Say, who was it used to call you Post, Newell?"

"Jack Caslon," said Kit hurriedly. Half the room fell into silence; Len Thomson kicked Dick's shins, but he only stretched and raised a glass. "Tha's so, Jack Caslon. He's dead, Go' bless him. Here's to him, well rid of us—and we of him."

The words were audible to every one; the stillness became complete and hopeless. Kit turned in his chair and looked at Dick. "If you think that, perhaps you'd better go," he said, inclining his head slightly toward the door.

"Whoof!" said Dick inanely. "The loyal boy. More'n to those wives o' yours on the island, what? Think of it, boys!"

Kit fixed him with his eyes, motionless. "You'd better go," he repeated.

The silence became charged. Dick leaned forward on the table. "Huh? What's that?"

"You're drunk, I know," said Kit, "but if it makes you like that you'd better get out. Come back when you're sober."

"My God!" Dick rose; he was really far gone, but he summoned some semblance of dignity, hitched up his Sam Browne belt and threw his head back. "Huh, I will. I won't stay here to be insulted by any one, 'specially not by a man't throw over his oldest friend for a guy that the whole class knew for a sucker—"

He was lurching toward the door, unsteadily but consecutively; Kit was on him in a flash, swinging him round by the shoulder, his hand raised. "Take that back, damn you! Drunk or not, you take that back! Quick!"

"Shan't! Le'go me—"

Zip! Kit's fist on his jaw, and Dick all over the floor.

They got him out, and some one took him home in a taxi. Kit stood tight-lipped and speechless amid a suddenly sobered crowd talking in quick undertones.

"He brought it on himself, anyway—"

"He always was a swine when drunk," from Jen Cobb. "He deserved all you gave him. I'm behind you all the way, old boy."

"No one says that here," said Kit, vexed by an insane desire to cry.

"No, no, damned right. Oh, he'll come round when he's sober. He'll apologize."

"I don't give a hang whether he does or not—"

"Oh, come, buck up, old man!"

"Yes, man, it's all over now. Let's forget about it. What about a rubber of bridge, eh?"

Len Thomson left the house with Jen Cobb two hours later. "All the same," he said, "it was a bit swift, wasn't it, as against a drunken man?"

"Yes," said Jen, his eyes on the pavement. "But there's a lot behind it. I doubt if he ever comes back

to Dick. Good job he isn't going to marry the sister."

"Perhaps that's one reason for this tiff?"

"No. No, it was nothing but the Jack *motif,* and that was the only thing that could have brought him to it. Anything else he'd have just laughed off. There's a lot of depth to friend Kit, and it's pretty obscure down there. No one's ever really seen to the bottom, I think, even Jack Caslon.—But I wouldn't mind following it, straight to the very bottom."

It was a week before he talked to Kit about it. "Oh, yes, Jen, he wrote and apologized, and I accepted it. And I'm having dinner with him and some other people to-night. Funny, isn't it? how short a time one can care. I only know there's a good party on to-night, and I don't want to miss it."

"The life's getting you, in spite of everything," said Jen, swallowing the surprise he felt. "Well, no one escapes. Duchess of Richmond stuff."

Kit smiled, inertly. "Yes, at times. I know Dick was damnable, utterly damnable, but I don't care. I don't mind seeing him."

Jen started to speak, paused, and said: "See here, look out. It's all very well to forgive. But you'd better be sure you *are* forgiving. Not just not caring."

"Oh, blat!" said Kit, turning away. "You and your metaphysics. What on earth's the difference?"

"Think of Jack, and you'll see the difference."

A long pause; then Kit: "I believe I won't go to that dinner, Jen. I'll go and get Mary Vane to play. That's better, every way."

CHAPTER XII

I

MARY VANE, with her north-lit studio and her sprawling black piano and her roommate Ethel Stock, a gaunt girl with bobbed hair and an unsmiling and untimely (and for that reason rather convincing) devotion to Ibsen, became a fixture in Kit's weeks. She represented an unfailing response to a mood in him, a mood of thinking about Jack and the emptiness of life and the pathos of his lost youth. She also served as an antidote to the unsatisfying but narcotic whirl of things in Park Avenue, the cafés, hotel ballrooms and road houses.

And then, in early May, he made the discovery that Mary Vane partook of that side of life also. It came about by his learning that she was going to a certain dance, to which he had also been invited. He had not intended to go, but immediately determined to do so, out of pure and rather anxious curiosity to see Mary Vane in a ball gown.

The dance was given by the Vandermylls, mother and son, relics of two semi-fabulous patroon families of Westchester County. They had not very much money, their ancestors having sold their real estate too soon; but they knew people who had. Their family prestige awed the more newly rich and their eccentricities amused them, and they went with the best. Bobby Vandermyll had been in the class ahead of Kit at Yale, and had failed to make any great impression on it. He was about five feet tall and had

developed a watery blond mustache. Much to every one's astonishment he had allowed himself to be drafted (having, of course, eye trouble that prevented his getting a commission), and had risen to the rank of sergeant-major in the Quartermaster Corps.

Mrs. Vandermyll, in a voluminous skirt that swept the floor, stood in the bay window of her front drawing-room and received. "How *do* you do, Christopher!" she said, her large loose lips making a curious whishing sound over her words. "I'm so *very* glad to see you. I *hope* you won't find us *too* staid and straight-laced, after that island of yours! Bobby—yes, he's dancing. I wanted him to wear his uniform, but he wouldn't. I think it's *such* a shame you men won't.—Why, *how* do you do, Mrs. Fleming! Yes, the sergeant-major's dancing . . ."

Stayed and straight-laced Mrs. Vandermyll was, up to the very neck, but she had a daughter, Cora, who was quite otherwise. She had eloped with a chauffeur, been rapidly disinherited, divorced and pardoned, and now proclaimed openly that she intended to marry the first British peer she could lay her hands on. As soon as he had escaped from the mother Kit caught sight of this interesting person whirling about in the arms of a man in a British major's uniform, and he wondered if this were the peer. At the same moment she sighted him out of her extremely sophisticated brown eye; she stopped dancing and yelled: "Hi, Newell! Come here, I want to see you!"

The habit of calling men by their last names she had retained from her patroon ancestry; otherwise she was indistinguishable from the average louder débutante of some years' standing. She shook hands with Kit and introduced him to Major Boon (spelt, he afterwards learned, Bohun).

"Well, Newell, I had to shake hands with you because I've never shaken hands with a king before. Quite a romantic figure, aren't you? What on earth brings you here? Perfect menagerie. Well, so long. Cut in on me, when you see this man's about to faint."

He danced once with some one else, was cut in on, and then perceived Mary Vane dancing with the same British officer. He watched her with the greatest care: her gown was of light green, rather longer and more tightly fitting than most, but entirely "there"; she was dancing well, though rather erectly, and smiling with perfect ease; her dark eyes were precisely performing the conventional uses of eyes at a dance.

"Well, I'll be darned," he said, and cut in.

II

He was somewhat at a loss for something to say, having never addressed her in her capacity of A Girl. They trotted about without speaking; the music blared comfortably from under the stairs; inanely the words swam in his head: *Ganz zum Ueberfluss meinte Eusebius noch folgendes . . .*

"Funny crowd," he gasped.

"Yes, isn't it? I heard Cora Baxter yelling to you about it."

"She's odd, isn't she? Lots of character—"

"Yes, though mostly on the wrong track. And yet her mother seems . . ."

"—*dabei aber sprach viel Seligkeit aus seinen Augen.* Who in heck was Eusebius?" he asked, cutting across her remarks on Mrs. Vandermyll. She abandoned them with a laugh.

"Why, he was Schumann's idea of one side of himself, the calm, meditative, philosophic side, and—"

"Oh, I see. I wonder—"

"—and Florestan represented the other, the wild, hurrah-boys side.—What?"

"I was just wondering what Eusebius would have thought of this. His last word was rather—solemn, wasn't it?"

"Eusebius be damned," said Mary Vane. And he knew that the remark was a challenge and a warning; "I'm not a ministering angel, but only a human girl that enjoys a good time, and you can keep away if you don't like it." He liked that.

"All right," he said cheerfully, "let's have a go at—what's the other fellow's name? Florestan."

III

At two-thirty he found himself with her and three others in an all-night restaurant, the dance having ended, patroonly, on the stroke of two. The place was walled with somber black, and the lights were carefully shaded so as to look wicked; small tables and a settee running along the wall combined to give a Parisian effect. In the middle of it all, on the oblong of clear floor, bank cashiers, Semitic persons from the theater, successful motor car salesmen and their lawful wives danced with every visible semblance of the most perfect virtue in the world.

Mary Vane smoked a cigarette, ate a cheese sandwich and drank intrepidly from a ginger ale with real Scotch in it. She wasn't showing off, exactly, for she wasn't that kind, but Kit did not consider it very convincing. He had a mischievous desire to push and push, to see how far she would go.

She was talking with the Britisher, whose name Kit had already discovered was not merely Boon but

Mackworth-Devizes-Boon, two hyphens. He was slight and tall, with a brown mustache, mild-mannered and winning.

"The band ought to be black," he was saying. "Somehow you never can get the right effect of go in a place of this sort unless the band is black. Everything else is black here; why not the band?"

"We wear them on our sleeves in this country," said Mary idly.

"Ha! Representing the heart, what?"

"No, we've a little more to show than that. But it is funny . . ."

She broke off with a glance toward Kit, who said: "What's funny? What about a black band?"

"Nothing that matters."

"Go on. I'd like to hear it."

"I don't want to, Kit. You've lost a good many relatives and things.—Suppose you and I see what we can do with this waltz?"

"Yes. But not if you're just embarrassed. I'd rather hear what you were going to say."

"Well, I think I won't repeat it, not because it would be embarrassing to you but because it would sound flat now."

"That's right," said Boon approvingly. "Never dig up a *mot*. Dangerous."

"I'll say something," said Kit, "and that is that it's funny how when a relative dies, that you don't give a hang for necessarily, you go about stiff with crape; but when some one dies that you've, in a way of speaking, *chosen* to care for, you don't even wear a black band."

"That was a good deal my idea," said Mary. Then, turning to Boon: "He lost a friend in the war, the dearest friend he had."

"Bad luck," said the Englishman simply, his eyes on Kit, exactly right.

"And it was particularly hard, because the friend thought Kit was dead when he died."

"Yes, could anything be hatefuller—his going on, and finding I wasn't there? It takes away from the beauty of his death so."

This was all most astonishing, but Kit knew in a flash that it was right; the incongruous place and the late hour made it possible and natural. Never before had he been able to talk so easily and normally about Jack's death. Florestan turned Eusebius!

"I lost two brothers," said Boon. "Do you know, I don't mind much any more. Dear fellows, both of them; but after all, they're well out of it, aren't they?"

"That's it," said Mary. "To mind for a while is nice, but to go on minding, that's selfish.—No, Kit, I don't mean you. You're very near it still."

"I suppose I shall stop missing him," said Kit, sighing. "It's a bad old world."

The two others of the party, a girl and a man, returned to the table, and Kit went off to dance with Mary. "I like that Englishman," he said. "Think of it, two brothers! Though one might do without brothers, at a pinch."

"Often," agreed Mary, "though I've heard he was particularly fond of one of them."

"Is Cora Baxter going to marry him?" asked Kit.

"Not him—the son of a younger son!" and the evening ended on that note.

IV

There were more serious things to think about, or so he told himself. Jen Cobb began to intimate it,

and there was no denying it: he was out of a job, and it was time he tried to find one.

Jen's preference for him was newspaper work, and he actually brought about a dinner-meeting between Kit and a certain city editor of his acquaintance. The city editor was slightly bald and his mustache was over-long; it impeded the passage of cauliflower and made him look like a walrus. Also he was unimpressed, having met many young men with vast possibilities and no "experience." Yes, there would be an opening in the summer; he'd be glad to take Kit on, but he would like to know by the first of June.

The status of a cub reporter, after the war and tumults of the last years, had no glamour for Kit. When he now thought of newspaper work as a career he visioned something very new and intellectual and incorruptible with himself at the helm, his position fortified by a large investment; something quite different from a reportership.

"Thanks," he said, "but I won't make you wait till the first of June. Jen flatters my journalistic ability. I don't think, myself, that newspaper work is my line."

Jen was disappointed, and told him he had been hardly polite. "But he was so silly," said Kit. "That wall-eyed type of intellect. Everything must be done on one model; whether it's good or bad doesn't matter. A technician. He reminded me of a more civilized version of Aitaki—my Samoan pastor, a blithering fool . . ."

"This man isn't a fool, Kit. He's a second cousin of my sister's husband. Not that it matters, of course, if you have a better idea."

"I have none," said Kit, "and may I be delivered

from them. Ideas are all very well for the young, but they die with a craving for lemonade, or wearing socks and ties of the same color.—Even a half-baked flippancy, such as mine, is preferable."

"No, it's not," said Jen.

"Well, it's more sincere, anyhow." And that, as Jen recognized, was just the damnable part of it.

Dick Hoffington was stockbroking. "Why don't you come down?" he asked. "Money may not amount to much, but it's the one thing you don't get tired of running after."

At this Kit felt a reverberation of old thoughts. "No, Dick, not for me. It's the one thing that never could be worth while. I wouldn't mind making some, incidentally, but the work must be the thing."

"As you will," said Dick. And then he added, with all his old-time blandness: "Do you suppose you'd be working now if Jack Caslon were alive?"

This was less than three weeks after the Park Avenue episode. An apology had been made and accepted, but Kit wondered rather uncomfortably at the mind that could go barging into the business again, so casually. "That's a hard question, Dick. Make Jack alive, and I'll answer it."

"You talk as if I'd killed him," remarked Dick.

This rang more brutal than bland, and Kit left him in disgust. By way of obliterating the impression he resolved to think no more about a career for at least a week.

V

One night he gave a dinner at his house which was followed by a long session at an imitation *café chantant*. They were six, Kit, Mary, Cora Baxter, Major

Boon and a married pair, asked with some vague idea of chaperonage; these, as they don't matter, and aren't going to matter, may be referred to as A (the wife) and X. Around two o'clock the conversation reached that mellow ease in which Kit now found both the fullest forgetfulness and the fullest sense of living.

Boon (returning with Cora from dancing): That waiter's taken away the end of my drink again. Tarsome. I never really enjoy a drink till the ice is all melted.

Cora: That's so; Englishmen hate ice. Ho! Funny.

Mary: I don't know; I think this talk about English people being cold is mostly fiction, and rather cheap fiction at that.

Cora: My dear, did you ever try to bring one to the scratch?

A (with a gurgle): Scratch is right! Treat 'em rough, Cora!

Boon: Most of this talk about people of different races being different strikes me as tosh. I've trotted round a good bit; India and Jamaica and Gallipoli and the Front, and I've found the same old gags work pretty much everywhere. Love and money, ambition and vanity—you never get away from them.

Kit: Yes, most nationalistic talk is silly. *People* are always the same; only their manners are different. The best—

X (one of those red-blooded Americans born with a constitutional hate of all races but their own, and especially the one that gave them birth): Some manners are different. Some are just plain bad.

Kit: The best-mannered people I ever saw were the Nairavans, and they were also the most ignorant and primitive.

Boon: The manners of most Orientals are exquisite, compared to ours.

Cora: Well, what does that prove, except that manners have nothing to do with civilization? I've always known that. That's why I've never had any manners, or wanted any.

Mary: I've always thought that ill-mannered people were more sincere than the others, but—

Boon: Ah, *but*—exactly! You lose something by not having them. You—

Cora: Nonsense. I—

Kit: We're a pioneer race still. Wait till we're as thickly populated as Europe, and you'll see our manners take a brace.

Boon: Hold up: the Arabs have the most beautiful manners, and they live about one to the square mile—

Cora: I am NOT INTERESTED in the Arabs. (Cora was possessed of a certain primitive power. Her remark conclusively put a quietus on sociology.)

Boon (with a tolerant smile, as though to an attractive child): What are you interested in, duckie, besides me?

Cora (chin on hand, eyeing him sidewise): I'm not particularly interested in you. I told you that the first time I met you.

Kit: And Boon didn't believe you, and that's why he hangs round. The snake and the toad all over again—

Boon and Cora (in one breath): *Thanks!*

Cora (her bored but naught-escaping eyes on him): Newell, as a matter of fact I'm rather interested in you. We all are. We don't half know about that island yet.

Mary: No one does, or ever will. He can't tell, and isn't fool enough to try.

Cora: Oh, I don't mean women—that is, I don't *care* about women—

A (silkily): No, darling, you're right there.

Cora: I mean, what I remember of him is a little boy in knickerbockers playing with Bobby and not liking him—as who would?—in short, a nice little man destined for Yale and Wall Street. Now he turns up—well, with an air. Mystery. Concealed power. You, Boon, with all the knocking round you've done, haven't got half his air. That's why I don't want to marry you. Teddy, my late lamented husband, had that air to perfection, which was of course why I fell for him. He'd sit behind the wheel as Lloyd George might sit at a Cabinet meeting. The fate of empires seemed to hang on that man's profile. What he was actually thinking of was Norma Talmadge, which was of course why I left him. No, I'll say frankly that if the Archangel Gabriel told me I'd have to marry one man in this room, and could have my choice, Newell would be the one.

Kit (taking a drink, highly cheerful): Now isn't it nice to have that settled! The only doubtful point is whether the Archangel Gabriel would compel me to accept.

Boon: According to Cora's game, obviously.

Mary: Oh, the Archangel Gabriel is every one's champion. About the only one.

X: And as he doesn't exist . . .

Mary: Yes, hence this world, I suppose.

Boon (eyeing her thoughtfully): What would you ask Gabriel to give you?

Mary: In my more exalted moods I'd ask to be married to a man I could love all my life. In moments of common sense I'd ask for an assured income of a million a year.

Cora: Silly, why ask for that when with something else you could have the fun of getting it? I'd be eighteen again, keeping my present knowledge and experience. Boon?

Boon (after intending for a fraction of a second to say something else): A seat in the Shires, and twenty thousand a year.

Cora: Newell?

Kit: A certain person alive who is dead.

X: A certain person dead who is alive.

A: Oh—a really becoming face cream. This is idiotic, you know.

Cora: It is. We're all, you observe, like those fools in the fairy stories that ask for money or material benefits of some kind. All except Newell, who's at heart a dear, but six months hence he'd probably choose differently.

X: Very likely, but what does this prove?

Cora: It proves the one thing I've always believed and lived by in the course of a long and colorful life. It proves that we're a race of moles. We know that wealth doesn't necessarily bring happiness, and yet we ask for it. Even when we've got it and see that we aren't happy, we haven't got the sense to go on and find out what is worth having. We admire religion and philosophy from a distance, but, Heavens! we don't ask for them. They make me tired. Why has no one ever said that, if religion and philosophy were what they're said to be, we'd all be St. Francises and Socrateses?

Kit: Because only a few of us *can* be.

Cora: Exactly—religion and philosophy don't *apply!* Damn it, what good is differential calculus to a bunch of moles? What good are the Sermon on the Mount and the Dialogues of Plato to *us?* Talk

about evolution—blah! We've had those things before our eyes for two thousand years or more, and still we've got no more sense than to ask for a million a year. Why doesn't it occur to any one that something's *wrong?* Look at the war. I ask you, look at the war!—and at us now. I say, either you've got to admit that the race is a failure, a race of moles, or that religion and philosophy are, as applied to the race as a whole. Personally, I pin my faith to the moles. Simple animal nature seems to me a safer thing to build on than the visions of a few pure vague souls. I think the only things to admire are the old animal things—lust and strength and courage and plain common sense. In short, going after what you like and avoiding what you don't like.

Kit: Bravo! You're not—

Mary: *Brava,* in this case. Adjective, referring to performer.—Yes, I'll say brava, because Cora is courageous at least. And yet I don't agree. Hang it, I don't! What Cora says makes me feel hot all over, and resisting. I couldn't possibly say what I mean the way Cora does, and yet I'm perfectly sure that we're not such swine as that.

Boon: Easy on! Don't get to despising swine!

Mary (laughing): No, I won't. Swine are all very well in their way, and so are moles, and so are weevils. But—men are neither moles nor weevils! There!

Boon, Kit, X: Aha! The truth at last!

Mary (her eyes dancing, the pale tan of her face pink with excitement): Well, isn't that what Cora says we are? I deny it. I say the same things don't satisfy us, and can't. I say we've got to *try.*

Boon: Yes, Mary, we belong to the *trying* variety

of weevil. Even the most weevilly of us crave some sort of spiritual satisfaction. But where does it lie? That's the question.

Cora: Nowhere. That's the answer.

Mary: In merely trying, possibly.

Cora: We have with us to-night the late Robert Browning. Oh, don't think I haven't gone through all—

A: I'm getting so sleepy. I want to dance, or else go home.

Mary: Yes, but was he so absurd? After all, we may—

X: Come along, then. You fellows don't have to be at an office at nine. Good night. Fine party, Newell.

The four others: Good night. So long. See you soon.

Cora (watching the two retreating figures): And the brute never even offered to pay his share.—Not that I blame him.

Boon: But you do! Aha, the joint in the armor!

Mary: I *will* say it. We may be unhappy trying, but we're more unhappy not trying.

Cora: Comfortable, but obvious. Also untrue.

Boon: My commentary on all this is that we four, in spite of our cynicism, are all nearer to something than those two that went out. Cora says awful things, but at heart she doesn't mean them. They don't say awful things, and would probably disagree with Cora, if put to it, but they do mean them.

Kit: Well, there's something to be said against discussing metaphysics on an evening of pleasure.

Cora: But this isn't metaphysics! It's where we stand, what we are, now, us! Lost children! People

who've gone through hell for an ideal, and find the ideal bogus! Disillusioned, blind, sore—damn it, I want to bite some one!

Mary (humorously, and without offense): Cora, did you go through hell in the war? I didn't, frankly.

Kit: Oh, you don't have to have been through it to feel what Cora feels. We all feel it. It's in the air.

Boon: And the dreary part of it is that we'll mug along somehow, without ideals, and then when prosperity returns we'll gradually build up a new set of ideals. And then there'll be another great crash like that of 1914, and the whole structure will come tumbling down about our grandchildren's heads. And they'll want to bite us, and say: "But why didn't they tell us, why didn't they *make* us see? . . ." By Jove, it does make one sick of the game.

Cora: Cat-sick.

Kit: It does. That, and other things.

Mary: Well, I can't say that I am wholly sick of it yet, though it does surprise me to find myself the little ray of sunshine of the party. Ordinarily I feel as sore and sick and disillusioned as any one, but when I hear any one going on as Cora does, I feel perfectly sure there's something more, and better, to it. It's . . .I don't know. It's just there. I know I sound like Robert Browning, not to mention Pollyanna, but there it is!

Boon: Hang on to it, dear child, even if it's only an illusion. An illusion that's never destroyed is as good as a reality.

From that point Boon and Cora, having talked themselves dry, fell into a dialogue on something else. Mary listened; Kit pushed a cigarette stub about

a dirty plate with a fork, and reflected that when he looked up again he would see Mary's arms, slim and sinewy, like a boy's, but better shaped. Pollyanna did not have arms like hers, or Robert Browning either, for that matter.

VI

Presently another "show" began. They had not seen the beginning of the first one, and turned in their seats to watch. At least Mary and Kit did; the two others already sat facing the middle of the room. In their new positions the diameter of the table stretched between Kit and Mary.

There was a song about a sewing machine and a dance about my gum-gum goo-goo girl. Then there was a dance about some lobsters, the chorus being decorated in bright red claws, though the action was presumed to take place in the sea, with the lobsters in a raw condition. Then five tall ladies in cloth of gold and cloth of silver swished about for a while emitting faint mewing sounds. Then there was a comedian, a simple Jew in a dinner coat.

He was very funny, and one could not help listening to him. In the course of some patter about domestic difficulties he became still funnier, and less nice. It wasn't nice at all, when you came to think of it. He stalled for a moment, as expert comedians do, to let the joke sink in; heads slowly turned toward heads and throats let forth low delighted gurgles. It was an insult to the joke to enjoy it entirely alone. Boon and Cora turned toward each other, Kit and Mary similarly.

She was flushing, she was angry and shocked, but as she met Kit's eye her face broke into a smile of

horrified understanding. Just an instant; then she looked away again.

A scene from the past, the very distant, absurd old past, came to Kit's mind. He was outside a theater, talking to some one in uniform about a taxi. And this, so different, was what he had missed then.

The comedian retired, the chorus of Bareback Beauties scampered on. Kit sat breathing heavily, his eyes fixed sideways on a triangle of Mary's clear brown forearm, visible above the tablecloth.

VII

A few nights later he called on her and suggested a bus ride. The idea had come to him at the corner of Eighth Street; it seemed a nice thing to do on a warm May evening. Mary agreed monosyllabically, slammed a small hat on her head with a deft, petulant gesture, and went out with him.

"Of course we could take a taxi, if you'd rather," he said as she approached the Avenue. Mary gave a curious little backward twist to her head and said: "Would you very much rather I *didn't* rather?"

He turned toward her quickly, conscious of fatigue in her. "Why, no, of course not."

"I've taken so many summer evening bus rides. Waiting for a seat down in the Square . . ."

"Yes, of course, a taxi's nicer. We can get one at the Brevoort. No, I've got a better idea than that; we'll take a taxi to the garage, and then I'll take you out in my car. I was a fool not to think of that first."

Twenty minutes later they were swinging up and down the golden hills of the Riverside. The evening was entirely altered; he had gone to her for music and ministration, and here he was showing her a Time.

He was not particularly fond of driving, but he thought on the whole he liked it this way.

Mary said almost nothing, but she held her head in a way that denoted elation, and when at last she spoke her voice was no longer tired.

"Oh, I do like this, Kit. This is so exactly what I like."

"What, motoring?"

"Not so much just motoring, as doing it expensively. Having everything as nice as it could be."

"There are lots more expensive cars than this."

"Technically, perhaps. I don't look beyond paint and upholstery.—Why . . ."

"What?"

"Oh," said Mary drearily, "I was just thinking how true that was of me, all through. Paint and upholstery! I'm like that."

"I suppose you mean something unpleasant, but I don't think I agree with it. I won't"—he raised his voice above the wind—"take your word for it, anyway."

"You're very kind," said Mary.

"Kind be hanged," retorted Kit.

He said it quite low, but Mary did not seem to care for it. "You'd better stop," she said, "when you come to a good place. I want to talk, without having the words blown out of my mouth." Her voice was tired again.

He pulled up in a shady street in Riverdale, and half turned in his seat, waiting. The loose sleeves of Mary's light wrap, which during the drive had blown back and laid bare her arms to the elbow, now covered all but her hands, lying quietly on her lap. After a pause she merely turned her head toward him and began talking.

"Because I understood about your friend Jack, and because you're an idealistic person temperamentally, you've got the notion that I'm something between Saint Cecilia and—and a bottle of headache cologne. It won't do, you know. I hoped you'd see when we began going about together, but you haven't seemed to."

"Oh, your Florestan side?"

"No!" said Mary impatiently. "There you are, idealizing again. Schumann's Florestan was a pretty good fellow. Mine isn't. He's cheap and common—and he's Me. You think of me as an artist, perhaps. Well, I'm not, not at *all*. An artist can put up with anything for his art. I can't. I can't *stand* Greenwich Village and psychoanalysis and bobbed hair and cockroaches and genius in a garret. I *hate* all that! And what I do like is going about having a good time, restaurants and dancing and spending money with cheap, brainless, Philistine people."

"If you're thinking of Cora—"

"I'm not thinking of Cora. She's got brains and sincerity. I'm thinking of those two that went out the other night, that Boon blamed for not even being interested in talking about their own position. Why, I'd go about all the time with people no better than that, if they'd show me the sort of time I like. How do you suppose art goes with a nature like that? Why, my art's dead as a doornail. Old Mazchef cries over it. He says I'm behind where I was two years ago, and he's right. I never play well except when I've just received an invitation to spend a week-end with rich friends in the country. When I come back I play like the devil, and go on doing so till I get another invitation. See? The thing simply isn't in me."

"Isn't it? I don't believe much of this, you know."

"Well, you don't have to. But I do, and I'm going to act on it. I'm not going to keep up this pretense any longer. My father can't really afford to keep me here. He's just a doctor, and doesn't earn much. Now that all idea of the concert stage is off, I'm going to pack up and go home to Cleveland. I shall teach little girls scales so as to earn money to buy decent hats with."

"Horrid little girls! Mary—"

"It's all I'm good for. Lots of women do it, better ones than I." Her voice shook, but she was sure she was not going to cry. They were both quite sure; and then she was wiping her eyes.

He put one hand on hers. "Mary, this is all very dear and brave of you—"

She shook him off. "Don't pity me! I can't stand it. What I say is straight truth."

"Well, what if it is? Doesn't every normal person like a good time? That side of you's been starved, what with the war, and Greenwich Village, and all."

"Oh, *no!*"

"Why, I like you better, for knowing you like those things."

"What on earth does it matter whether you like me or not? What's the use in—"

"Oh, now, don't be—"

"Don't *you* be—"

In a short scuffle, of wills more than bodies, he seized her two hands and was bending over them, peering up at her face. "Mary, Mary! There's just one thing for it, don't you see? Marry me, and you can have all that, and make me damnably happy into the bargain. I've so much more than I know what to do with—it would be such a joy to give you things. You can dance all night and play Schumann divinely

all the morning. It would be so nice! For both of us! And—what the . . ."

She was laughing, on a low note, but semi-hysterically. "Oh, confound it all! Can't a woman ever talk frankly without running up against a proposal of marriage—or am I just a plain fool? . . . Yes, that's it. Kit, you're a dear good boy. You've acted perfectly. Now let's drive home."

"Mary, see here, I'm serious—"

"Don't be! I warn you, don't be!"

"I will! I want you to marry me! What's the matter with that?"

"Oh, *don't,* Kit! Don't you see that the more serious you are the worse it makes it?"

"No! What on earth—"

"You had a chivalrous impulse toward a ridiculous, self-pitying woman. You made the right move. But you don't suppose I'm going to *seriously* consider marrying you for your money? After practically asking you to ask me?"

"You didn't! And what's the money got to do with it, anyway?"

"Well, a good deal, I should say! Dancing all night and Schumann all the morning—ha!"

She was laughing again, not hysterically now, but with amusement, and in full control of herself. She leaned forward and patted his knee. Her control made Kit angry.

"See here, Mary! Mary, see here! Stop that confounded laughing! Damn it all, it isn't every night I ask a woman to marry me! . . . Well, then, what's so absurd about it? I need you and you need me. I'm able to give you certain things you want—*need;* I'm only too glad to give them to you. It's a pleasure. I want to see you happy. I'm not entirely selfish . . ."

Mary let him talk on in this vein for some time. But when at last he paused all he could get out of her was:

"Kit, it's this. I'm a poor cheap creature, but there are some things I stick at. One of them is selling myself. Even to a man I like—much less to a man I like."

"But if you do like me—"

"*Like!* Stop and think, man!"

This took him aback. He went on arguing after a moment, but jerkily, with long pauses. Mary merely sat there, her hands crossed on her lap, staring down the street. They might have stayed there for hours but that a prayer meeting broke up in a near-by church, flooding the street with pedestrians. This was one thing too much to argue against, so he started the car and turned homeward.

He drove without speaking, but he thought hard. She was right, he saw; right in her way; yet there was rightness on his side also. It was hard to dovetail their respective rightnesses; he gave it up for the moment, and fell to wondering what it would be like for him here with Mary in Cleveland. . . .

Well, it wouldn't be like much!

He pulled the car up with a jerk. They happened to be on the Viaduct, under bright lights, but it was late now and there were few people about. Not that he would have cared, in any case.

"Mary," he said quietly, "I see it now. I see my mistake. I asked you the right thing for the wrong reason. The reason—what could it possibly have been but one thing? I want you. Not for what I can do for you, but for yourself. *You.* There's nothing else."

Her face under its small black hat was drawn and

expressionless in the electric light. He wondered if women usually looked so at this juncture.

"You've been so much to me these last weeks. That terrible home-coming, losing all I expected to find. You've been the one bright saving thing about it, from the very first evening. I felt it, but I didn't realize consciously. That other night, with Boon and Cora and the others, I think I did then. I ought to have. But I do now, anyway, Heaven knows . . ."

She gave a little sigh, or gasp, and looked away from him.

"Mary, don't go and leave me now. I simply can't think of life without you. There'd be nothing left—no good, no hope, no faith. You mean all those things to me now, and you simply can't take them away from me. You must see, Mary, you *must* . . ."

She looked at him again. She saw the smooth skin drawn tightly over the cheek bones, the sunken, starving eyes, the broad, sensitive mouth; she felt the appeal there, the appeal of so much that was fine and beautiful and in need. She put out her hand.

"I think I do see, Kit . . ."

He did not move, but smiled. "Well, you silly girl!"

"It's—it's all so damnable. I hate to see you suffer. You're so good—so—pathetic . . ."

He slowly put his arms around her; her cheek fell on his like dew on hot fields and rested there, in peace and sweetness.

A step sounded on the sidewalk. It was a policeman; Kit was just conscious of brass buttons and then a shrug, as the man passed on, grandiosely indifferent.

"It's all right!" he called, turning his head. "We're engaged!"

CHAPTER XIII

I

THEY were married on the 22nd of June, in Grace Church. The wedding was small, and "from" Aunt Emmy's house; one case of champagne sufficed for the breakfast.

Mary's parents, together with a younger daughter of twelve, came on from Cleveland; they turned out to be inconspicuous, well-dressed, well-bred people, not unpleased to be spared the fuss and expense of a wedding in their own home. Kit liked Dr. Vane, who wore a short beard and a frock coat and looked liked a figure out of the 'nineties. He said nothing whatever about money, and Kit told him, almost apologetically, that he had made a will leaving everything to Mary, and was settling five thousand dollars a year on her at once, to dress on. "She's dressed on less than five hundred all her life," said Dr. Vane, his eyes on the ceiling, "but I doubt if she'll be able to do it on five thousand."

Mrs. Vane Kit liked even better: a stoutish matron, impeccable in gray charmeuse, with a look in her eyes of having risen to answer many nocturnal telephone calls. She was quietly effective with young Alicia, a leggy, ubiquitous child, noisily pleased with her position as the one attendant of the bride.

"You must come and visit us," Kit told her, as she ran up to her mother with some loud exclamations over nothing. He saw Mary and himself "bringing

her out," six years hence, expensively and expansively.

Alicia fidgeted and blushed, had to be told to thank him, and backed gawkily off. Mrs. Vane turned from her to Kit with a rather lovely smile.

"She shan't bother you," she said.

Four days after the wedding they sailed for Europe on the *Carmania*.

II

In a religiously planned interview about Onauti and Naouea Mary exhibited herself as quite calm. Her chief criticism was that they had but three consonants between them, and one of these was repeated.

"But you've got only four consonants in your own two names," Kit pointed out.

Mary replied that her middle name was Jepson. "And anyway, do you suppose I hadn't taken all that into account, from the very moment you came home?"

"Really!" said Kit. "Was that entirely ladylike?"

"Entirely grandmother. There may be men who —*dash!*"

This was a week before the wedding; the two were in Mary's studio and busily engaged in packing music and shoes into a box. The exclamation concerned some misfit of brogues and Brahms.

"What men may there be?" resumed Kit, after a composition of the difficulty was effected.

"Who wouldn't, ah—forget themselves on a South Sea island. But I'm just as well pleased that you aren't one of them."

"Why, you unprincipled female!"

"I'm not, I'm highly principled. I was brought up on the good old maxim that I was to have no serious love affair prior to marriage, but that on no account

must I expect the same of my husband. It's a very good principle, and saves a lot of bother."

"It's not exactly modern."

"I don't know, I think it is, rather." Mary paused in the middle of the floor, vaguely rubbing her forehead. "I've heard it explained, all about the double standard. It's all quite logical, but I've forgotten. The Family came into it, I think. Do you suppose that large picture of Beethoven would go on top?"

"I think so. Where'll you put him? Over the piano?"

"That old thing? No—what am I thinking of! He goes to Cleveland, with all the junk."

"Junk!"

"Well, it is, Heaven knows."

"Woman, have you no sentiment?"

"Sentiment be hanged," said Mary, gritting her teeth as she stuffed a pair of slippers into the box. "I want nice things."

"And you shall have them . . . Well, I'm sorry you won't forgive me about my Queens. I thought it was going to be such a pretty scene. I never believed I'd live to regret a virtuous youth."

Mary sat back on the floor, cross-legged, and pondered. "I wonder, Kit—it just occurred to me—what would I do if there were Queens in the future? . . . I don't know. I positively don't know. But it doesn't matter, I shan't bother about it." She scrambled to her feet. "That's the encouraging thing about it—we're such *nice* people!"

The word "encouraging" hit him squarely between the eyes. Why on earth should they have to be encouraged? He thought on the whole it was better to ask, frankly, and did.

Mary looked up from a littered desk, and laughed.

"Sounds ominous, doesn't it? Why, I just meant that people sometimes have difficulty in living up to the contract of marriage, because, with the best intentions in the world, they haven't perfect control over their emotions. But breeding—niceness—has the strongest control of all, and that's what's encouraging, because we're both nice. Now there's only this desk to do. Will you be nice and quiet while I tear up letters?"

She was so unfeignedly light, and sensible withal, that he was able to forget the blow and reply correctly in her own mood: "Love letters?"

"Yep, some of them."

He lit a cigarette and sat down. "I'll be quiet as a mouse, dear, as long as I hear you tearing."

III

They spent July in London, with week-ends in the country. They found Boon there, he having been recalled just before their marriage, and he introduced them to people. In a short time they found themselves in with a mixed, intelligent, bewildered crowd of men and women engaged in trying to pick up the broken threads of peace. There was a curiously at sea and experimental air about them all; they saw the rich of 1914 poor, and the poor of that time rich; they forgot birth and breeding and pursued money; sickened of it and went back to birth; narcotized their puzzled brains with alcohol and the hope of sudden wealth. They sought new and preferably exotic jobs; they flocked to the theater, they set up shops, they played the Stock Exchange, they apprenticed themselves as motor car salesmen and plumbers' assistants. Most of their enterprises went to pot, and none of them kept them in town over week-ends; but always,

over all the doubt and disappointment, they kept up a chipper of persiflage, thoroughly *mondain,* frankly superficial and, in its pathetic, courageous way, highly diverting.

The Newells spent their first week-end with a score of them as the guests of one Sir Joseph Johnson, a wheel-maker, whom the war had made rich. He had a fat genial wife and a large early Victorian house on the Thames near Reading; as he made no pretense at being better than he was, and spent freely, his house-parties were well attended. On the Friday afternoon the two were turned loose, without introductions, in a huge hall where people were having tea. Kit was instantly taken in charge by a small creature in black, with yellow hair and long jet ear-rings. She looked like Maude Adams and talked like Alfred Jingle, and as she talked her blond eyebrows were continually raised to an incredibly high arch.

"How d'you do! Come over and sit by me. Tea? Been to Lords lately? . . . What, don't like cricket? . . . Oh, 'merican! Fancy! Ripping!—Edie, angel? . . . Neva mind now. I've got an American. 'Mericans don't know cricket. Fancy! Where shall we go now? I say, are you married?"

"Yes," said Kit, smiling, "and my name's Newell, but you might as well call me Kit right off."

"Angelic of you! My name's Vi. But how *'pallingly* dull of you to be married. Spoil your week-end, won't it? Howeva!"

Kit laughed out, everything about her so plainly said "Come on, boys!" He explained that he was on his honeymoon, but that he would be a brother to her; he was told in return that he was a duck, a seraph, an angel, *rather* a silly; that she was a widow, but not averse to a lark.

It was clear that she was the focal female figure in the gathering. People came up as she sat there, and she sent them off, teased them, patted them on the head, insulted them, all with a sure light touch that made them come again. Her knowledge of the celestial hierarchy was slight, for though she called every one a cherub or a seraph the term archangel was reserved for her highest approval.

"Tibby darling! Bridge? Righto—but I've lost my eyeglass. Will you—angel! Queenie, what a cherubic scarf! Love scarfs—Victorian. Edwardian, then. Bertie, seraph, take me on the river to-night? Moonlight. Italian lakes. Lamartine.—No moon? Tarsome of it. Tarsome of you to know. D'you know, some one's got to find my hankie. Angel—yes—hall, I think. Don't bother, Bertie's gone after it. My eyeglass—*archangel!* Where was it—you asked my maid? I say, did you kiss her? Ha ha! Yes, simply 'palling, isn't she? Can't afford a pretty one. Bertie, angel—but 's not the right one. Billiard room, perhaps. Coronet. Viscountess. Sorry, Berts, in for bridge. Tibs, you carry me?"

She was interested to learn that Kit was a friend of Boon, and spent the first evening in the business of drawing him out on the subject. She had heard of Cora, and was relieved to discover that she was not fabulously rich; but she remained nervous, having a constitutional dread of American female charm. It became quite clear to Kit, as to every one else within a five-mile radius, that she was strongly attracted toward Boon.

"You see, Kit, there's this. Tibs" (Boon's baptismal name was Tibbald, spelt Theobald) "now has a fairish chance of succeeding to Quayne. His most dangerous uncle—F. O. man, charming—has just died.

No issue. Next uncle's a moron. Shut up, keepers and things. Pretty safe—though he might sneak off to a registry. Quayne himself's simply doting. Widower. Only son died last year. Davos. Tubercular joints. Frightful. That leaves only Tibs and his father. And Quayne's well off. Hasn't sold his place, at least. Well, see? Good enough—but just as good for Cora, what?"

"I don't think Cora cares much for him," said Kit. "What she's after is a peer, and a rich one. See here, if you asked Cora over here, and gave her a shot at a peer or two, I don't think she'd stand in your way about Boon. Why not try it?"

This he thought a sensible proposition, or at least quite sensible enough to appeal to the mind of its recipient, but Lady Fieldes (she spelt it ffieldes) seemed disinclined to act on it. She said he was a cherub, flicked her ear-rings, dropped her gold cigarette case, and temporized. And this alternation of quasi-seriousness and pleasant fatuity endured through the week-end.

"I've got an idea," Kit told Mary, when they were back in the Ritz, "that she doesn't care about Boon or any one else. That she's perfectly content as she is, and is just titivating herself with the idea of marrying again."

"Possibly," said Mary. "I like her clothes. Where do people get the idea that Englishwomen always dress badly?"

"And she's got a house just off Cavendish Square, which is a very nice neighborhood, and no country place to eat up her income. A widow, a peeress, young and attractive, comfortably off—you can be darned sure she isn't going to throw it away without getting something better in return. Canny little thing, for

all she's so feminine. *Too* feminine. I don't like that limpet type. Can't you imagine how soft and jelly-like she'd feel, clinging to your shoulder? Oof! . . . And yet she intrigues me, somehow."

"And *so* she intrigues you," amended Mary, sitting before her dressing table sewing something. "I used to hear all about complexes in Greenwich Village. Your repulsion probably means you really like her quite a good deal."

Mary had a way of saying blasting things. This one made him feel limp and unclean for a moment; then he shook it off, got up, pulled down his waistcoat and walked up behind Mary. He leaned over and put his cheek on hers, as he loved to do. "You and your complexes!" he whispered. "Drivel!"

"When did you shave?" remarked Mary.

He stood up, laughing. "I'll do it now, before dinner." He threw off his coat, waistcoat and shirt and went into the bathroom, whistling.

"Don't," came Mary's voice after an interval. "You keep getting half a tone out, and it's awful."

He stopped whistling. The razor plowed into his cheek.

IV

They enjoyed England so much that they left only two weeks for shopping in Paris before they sailed for home. They landed early in September, and immediately set out on the work of doing over the house.

Kit had anticipated only a little papering and painting, but he saw Mary's point. The place was frowsty, out-of-date, provincial; she wanted it modern and nice, and she should have it so. They surrendered it to the decorators, and moved to a hotel.

When they moved back, six weeks later, he refused to regret a dollar or a fidget of it. Mary had known best. The hall, the dull dark old hall, was a thing of beauty in light walls and shimmery green hangings and glass lights; the dining room was pure Chippendale, with a complete new set of furniture; the library on the second floor, the usual sitting room, was delicious in bright chintzes against somber Italian backgrounds. The drawing room on the ground floor was another affair; to his surprise Mary had retained all the old rosewood "set" and had even supplemented it with ottomans and pier-glasses of its period. She had the walls stencilled with panels and scrollwork, and the result was a perfect creation of 1850, the only concessions to modernity being the hardwood floor and the furniture coverings, a smart stripe of light and dark mulberry.

"You see," Mary explained, "people's drawing rooms are always a joke, and I intend to make ours a real one. If any one laughs at it, the laugh will be on them." By way of capping the jest she brought down from the attic a few old handsomely bound books, Baxter's "Saints' Rest" and N. P. Willis's "American Scenery," and piled them on the largest rosewood table, at exact right angles to each other.

They began going about and entertaining, on a small scale. But they almost always took their guests out in the evening, and even for dinner Mary preferred a restaurant.

"Of course we have the bother of taking our drinks with us, but it's safer, on the whole. I'm not sure enough of myself to swing things in a great empty house. As for having our dance there, I won't hear of it. The only way to give a dance in your own house is to engage a caterer and music for a certain evening,

and then call up people on the morning of that day and tell them it's very small and casual. Otherwise they won't come. I'm not experienced enough to do that yet, so we'll just have to engage a ballroom and send out cards."

Kit wondered at her knowledge, but she appeared to be right. Every one's idea was to get away from home, even friends' homes. He suggested that it might be too early to give a dance anyway, as few of his mother's friends had yet called on Mary, but he was informed that it didn't matter. People no longer called; it was sufficient to take his mother's old list and ask every one who had not died.

"But are you sure it's all right?" he inquired anxiously. "Have you asked people? Have you asked Aunt Emmy?"

"I haven't asked Aunt Emmy, and I haven't asked the policeman on the beat. I do wish you'd trust me. We won't have a dance at all if you don't want to, but if we have one we're going to do it properly. I know you wonder how I know what's proper, but I do, and you'll find out that I'm right, if you wait."

The event justified her. Probably a good many of his mother's old friends sniffed at invitations from a lady they had not called on, and made up their minds not to call, then and there. But their children accepted, and if they were not asked got themselves asked, or came anyway. The dance was not large, but it was full of spirit and dash, and survived the usual exodus to the cafés till well after three. It made Mary famous, in a small but desirable way. Thereafter her engagements piled up.

She gave herself over to two things, society and music. It was odd how faithful she remained to the latter; often before breakfast and always for an hour

or two in the morning she was pounding away in the drawing room. She said she enjoyed her music much more now than she had for years, but she talked very little about it.

This was all very well, but it was a pursuit he could not share with her. Her daytime engagements were chiefly female affairs, and the only way he could really see her was to go out with her in the evening. From breakfast to dinner he was thrown entirely on his own resources.

V

As the autumn wore away in idleness he began chewing his nails again. And it was not the absence of business possibilities that bothered him.

Len Thomson had found a rich benefactor who wanted him to run an outdoor boys' boarding school in California according to certain not wholly unreasonable theories. He had to get some one to go in with him, and was anxious for Kit to try the job.

"You'll do the mental part and I the physical," he explained. "Of course I'll do some teaching, and you'll coach baseball, but that'll be our general division. It seems to me we'd make a pretty good combination, and we'd get no end of fun out of it. A ranch, producing most of what we eat, twenty miles from a railroad. No neighbors to speak of. Why, it would be like running a small kingdom."

Kit wanted to say that he had run a much larger kingdom entirely single-handed, and the prospect had little glamour for him. But his verbal objection was on other grounds.

"Thanks, Len, but I don't see myself drubbing Vergil into young boneheads, and still less do I see

myself being an uplifting and purifying influence on their mucky little morals. Boys bore me. Teaching the young idea how to shoot isn't my calling. And how do you suppose Mary would like it?"

"Well enough, I should think. She'd be a perfect little queen among us all."

"I had two perfect little queens on Nairava," said Kit, "and they were perfect only because they never attempted to interfere with me in any way. Mary's the most perfect woman in the world, but I don't see her in that galley."

"She'd be glad to go, if you made up your mind it was the thing for you," said Len, disappointed. "And I can't help feeling it is the thing for you. I thought the responsibility would appeal to you."

"Why?" said Kit quickly.

"Well, it certainly used to. You were never so happy as when you were bossing somebody around, and you did it well, too. That's why you got on so well with your people on the island."

There was no answering this. The fine fabric of past aspirations and deeds was crumbling about his ears. He mourned and yearned for it; but the dominant thought in his mind was that after governing a kingdom he wanted something better than half managing a boys' boarding school.

Jen Cobb became the main protagonist for another opportunity. Two or three wits and bright spirits of Kit's time at Yale had got hold of some money from somewhere and were going to start a weekly paper. They discovered that the term "liberal" had no exact political significance in America, and determined to give it one. The enlightened impartiality of that sheet was going to be the most remarkable product of modern times. They wanted Kit's brain

to help them, and were not averse to using some of his capital.

"I don't understand you at all," Jen said after some conversation on the matter. "In the old days you accepted a person for his brains, and let the rest go. You don't deny that Jim Driver and Harry Feldmann have brains—"

"No," interrupted Kit, "I only say that they both have cross-eyes. Run a paper with two cross-eyed men, *two?*—why, the idea's preposterous. They must find another, or be trepanned."

"Trepanning isn't that, it's making a hole in your head. The foolish thing is that in college you used to call yourself a liberal, and see things eye to eye with Jim Driver—"

"Not that! I never saw like the Maze at Hampton Court!"

"You're damned amusing," said Jen witheringly. Then he changed, and went on: "Dear man, don't you see I'm worried about you? Has life got nothing more in store for you? Are you just going to drop out, die, at twenty-five?"

"Apparently," said Kit bitterly. "I don't know what's got into me. To you it must seem like plain naughtiness, but it's not all that. The bottom seems to have dropped out of things. This liberal affair is just about the sort of thing I was thinking of last spring."

"You don't," said Jen carefully, "think you're getting a little—ah, swelled-headed, do you? I mean—"

"But of course I am, frightfully. I can't bear to think of myself as a young man of twenty-five, without experience or knowledge, who ought to take pretty nearly anything that's offered to him. I think of my-

self as King of Nairava. 'On this head,' I keep telling myself, 'a Crown has rested. The sacred gift of Power has lain in these little hands'—blah! And yet —and yet. You don't know how it was out there, how I worked and worried. If I hadn't taken it so seriously I'd get on better now. And yet if I hadn't taken it seriously, and didn't remember it seriously, I'd be lacking in proper self-respect, seems to me. Oh, it's a mess, all round."

"Life, Kit, is an episodic thing, and you want to have it continuous." Jen was in his best analytical vein; he spoke slowly and with shining eyes. Kit watched the workings of his mind as he might watch some sort of a show. "You won't recognize the brute power of circumstance over human destiny. Life threw you up on a pinnacle; you can't bear to have it throw you back on the flat. You sprawl on your belly, and cry for another pinnacle. I *have* flown—I *can't* grub! . . . Perfectly natural, but it won't do. We must all grub at times. Most of us grub always. Anyway, you can fly and then grub and still retain your self-respect and dignity. That fool Henley said 'I am the captain of my soul.' That's rot, but there's something there, something. At all events, a man can't say 'I have been the captain of an Atlantic liner; I won't be the captain of a miserable raft.' If circumstance throws him on a raft he must do what he can with it."

"I never was on a raft," said Kit petulantly, "so I can't say how I should act. But I was adrift in a fourteen-foot dory, and conducted myself fairly creditably. And the dory threw me up on an island, where I became king. Circumstance did that, and it can do it again. It damned well *must* do it again, if it expects much of me. . . . I've got a certain hold

on circumstance, you know; I've got money. I can wait for circumstance to become reasonable again. Circumstance be damned!"

"And your own soul?" said Jen softly. "Oh, well, it hasn't come to that, and it won't, I'm sure. It's too good a soul to go under. I can't help you, and I think you're silly, but I still have faith in you, at bottom. You can take that for what it's worth."

"It's worth something," said Kit, ashamed of his petulance. "Thanks."

He loved Jen and Jen loved him, but that did not appear to do any good. The same was true in the case of Mary. He tried once to confide his difficulties to her, but found her singularly baffling. "Dear boy," she said in a voice that though full of love sounded casual, "I'm so sorry. But I'm afraid I can't advise you. *I* don't know what's good for you."

Kit was not sure, but he thought he saw her eyes give a sudden and inappropriate snap. "I believe you do know, and won't tell me," he said peevishly.

"Do I?" Mary's eyes, raised straight at him, were frank as a child's. "Well, possibly." And then she openly smiled.

Kit, at a complete loss, fell back on a reproachful plaintiveness. "I think you're mean, if you know and won't tell me."

"Well, I'm a very mean woman," said Mary with annoying cheerfulness. But she softened slightly as she went on: "But I'll tell you one thing. I'm sure no one can help you but yourself. You're not the kind that can be helped.—Thank Heaven," she finished vigorously.

This, though encouraging, was scarcely helpful. He never tried her again. What was the use? What she said was true, and he recognized a certain fineness

in her withholding the pretense of assistance, when she could not give the real thing.

To keep himself occupied in the mornings he started to write a book about his Nairavan experience. It was a respectable thing to do, and it was reasonable to do it now, while his memory was still fresh. It also sounded well: "Kit? Oh, writing his book, I suppose." "Yes, I'm at work on a book—about Nairava, you know." But no one knew how badly it went. No one knew the pain, the bewilderment, the sense of dust, that came to him as he tried to put the clamoring events of those days into words; as he looked over the hot, pain-wrung pages of his diary and thought: "This was I, actually I, this brave, active, thinking, aspiring being. Where has it all gone? What have I done to lose it?"

VI

Through it all he kept missing Jack. The pain lost its freshness and unconscious pleasure and became a bitter, dull ache, impossible not to feel and not to hate.

One fantastic thought came and gnawed at him of nights, when the lack of fresh air and exercise made it difficult to sleep. Suppose, he kept thinking, I had my choice of being as I am now, with Jack dead, or back in the dory with Masson, but knowing Jack was alive and well; how would I choose? It was easy to say "Choose the dory," but it would be another thing to mean it. He would wake up with a start, thinking he was pitching about in open water; in the first wrenching of the heart, as he returned to the horror of that time, the belief that Jack was on earth again meant less than it should.

He also kept wondering, Why am I unhappy? I'm safe, at home, rich, happily married, healthy in mind and body, well liked by other people; what earthly right have I to be unhappy? I can't pretend it's Jack; he died for his country, gloriously, and already I miss him less. Is it the loss of some self-erected ideal? Then why can't I find the ideal again, and know peace? If it is simple fate, why should I bother? It's something lacking in me, no doubt; but as I'm not responsible for the lack, or even able to see what it is, why should I suffer for it?

His fastidiousness also played its part; a mean kind of devil to be damned by. It was largely his inability to lose himself in anything greater than himself that made him wretched. And yet that under-bred, parvenu little devil was as obnoxious in its absence as in its presence. He found a certain relief in parties, and at a certain hour of the night fastidiousness would desert him. Deadened by liquor (though never respectably drunk), he allowed himself to do and think things that were unspeakably hateful next morning. Thank Heaven, he thought, that squashy little Vi Fieldes was not here! With fastidiousness denying him even its benefits, leaving him when it became capable of doing him any good, Vi Fieldes would drive him mad. Fragile, bending little thing. Crisp, too; just enough resistance to be interesting—like celery. . . .

VII

A letter arrived from Uncle Jeff, asking him and Mary to come down for Christmas. They were particularly anxious to see Mary, none of them except Elise having been able to attend the wedding. The

tone of the letter was affectionate, and stirred him faintly.

Mary was willing to go, but she had a dinner engagement for the 23rd and another for the 26th. That left a scant two days, but he decided it would be enough, and then forgot about the whole thing. Mary also forgot, and asked some people to lunch on Christmas Day. She called it lunch; he supposed at first she meant midday dinner, with turkey and mistletoe. But, no, it transpired that she meant simple lunch, and planned to have dinner at night, as usual.

He became violently and unreasonably angry, really at his own negligence, but outwardly at Mary's disregard of the Puritan tradition of Christmas dinner. He accused her of worshiping worldly gawds, of selfishness, of impiety, of unwifely conduct. Mary opened her large eyes at him and met him more than halfway.

"But, dear, you forget things yourself, sometimes. Of course I'll call off the Jenningses. They had nowhere to go, as their house isn't in order, and I thought they'd rather have lunch with us than in a hotel. I'll put them off, and we'll go. Only don't storm so. It isn't nice."

He was sorry then, and apologized. He telegraphed his acceptance to Dimchurch. Mary could only stay her two days, but he determined to remain on for a week. It would bore him, no doubt, but it would be a different kind of boredom.

CHAPTER XIV

I

THEY arrived at Dimchurch at something after five; it was pitch dark already and the air smelt of snow. The station was ill lit and redolent of food, and no relatives were visible in the crowd of people that hurried about it. Kit left Mary on a high restaurant stool, with their baggage at her feet, and went to look outside. There was a line of motors, mostly filling up and driving away, but no sign of the old stuffy coupé that Uncle Jeff kept for winter use.

Mary received this baleful news with fortitude. She wore a dark blue suit and a small hat with one smart feather. Her fur and coat collar were thrown back and revealed her smooth brown throat and a string of pearls, also a touch of white at the top of her dress. Never had she seemed so exquisitely and perfectly dressed as in this smelly provincial station, and he hated to tell her that his relatives had failed to meet or send for them. It was the sort of mismanagement that she never allowed.

With perfect good humor she picked up the bags he could not carry—there was of course no porter—and followed him to the curb outside. Here things became much worse; there appeared to be no cabs, nor was there even any one who could tell them how to get one. After freezing for ten minutes they bundled into a trolley which strolled up, Kit seething with irritation, Mary distantly amused. In the car she sat

staring at the advertisements, quietly remarking on them.

"How fascinating all those things do look. If I could have syrup and cakes like that at this moment I'd die happy. I suppose we use a lot of those things, and don't know it. When I kept house down in the Mews I knew all their names and prices, but they didn't seem fascinating then either. Art is a wonderful thing."

They had a walk of two long blocks from the car line. It was the sort of thing that most people did all the time and all people a few times, but it was none the less hateful. The numerous and heavy bags wrung Kit's shoulders. What an idea Mary must be getting of his relatives!—but how wonderfully she was showing up! She was a great lady, pure and simple, taking the bad with the good. Surprise and admiration burned beneath his anger.

Aunt Ella opened the door on them. "Why!" she said accusingly. "Where's Henry?"

"I don't know Henry," replied Kit, dumping his bags on the floor; "I never saw Henry, I never heard of Henry, I don't want Henry, damn Henry! Aunt Ella, this is Mary."

"But I can't understand," went on Aunt Ella, absently clasping Mary to her bosom. "I told him to look out for you, and explain that Elise had the Junior Endeavor and I had a cold and . . ."

With a loud *whoof* a car pulled up at the door, and Kit recognized a haughty limousine and a haughty chauffeur he had seen at the station. Uncle Jeff came downstairs, Elise returned from her Junior Endeavor meeting, and a perfect fusillade of recrimination and explanation ensued. Mary leaned against the hat-rack and laughed.

"Aunt Ella, dear!" she cried at last, taking the good lady by the arm. "Let's forget it! We're here, and alive. Accidents will happen. Now is that a tea table I see in there? I'm so hungry!"

In their bedroom, an hour later, Kit complimented her on her conduct and apologized for dragging her into this hole. "I don't know why you call it a hole," said Mary. "They're dear good people, and that four-poster is worth at least five hundred dollars. It isn't a bit later than 1750. It goes down in the middle, and we shall sink into a sweaty little mess in it. Won't it be fun?"

Nothing had been said about dinner, so Kit merely changed his collar and told Mary to put on an afternoon dress, in accordance with his recollection of local ways. They went down to find Uncle Jeff in tails and the two women in low neck; their distracted inquiries elicited the information that there were to be twelve at dinner and a Christmas Eve party afterwards. Choking with laughter they rushed upstairs to change.

"It only needed that!" gasped Kit. "They've disgraced themselves by not meeting us, and we lose their respect forever by not appearing properly dressed for their party. Oh, I think families are splendid! Thank Heaven this is all I've got!"

Promptly at eight the evening party began. People arrived, some in Fords, some in limousines, some on foot; they dumped their "things" in the hall, greeted the hosts and guests of honor and walked about the rooms beaming indomitably. Things fairly went black before Kit's eyes. Was it possible that in the present year of grace people could make a Party by standing on their hind legs and working their jaws? With nothing to look forward to but vanilla ice cream and possibly elderberry wine?

Presently there was a hushed gathering in one of the front rooms; the lights were put out, a curtain was thrown back to reveal an electrically lighted tree on the front piazza; at the same time the First Church choir, invisible in the outer darkness, burst into the strains of "Hark, the herald angels." Sopranos held the air with a steadiness born of many a Friday night rehearsal; basses rumbled; tenors soared; altos diddled on one note in the middle; all was festive, but exact. At the end of the hymn the windows were thrown open and the choir trooped in, shivering and laughing, amid loud applause and congratulations.

Then came another throw-back: champagne, oceans of it. Uncle Jeff stood at the dining-room table opening bottle after bottle with loud pops, scattering foam over screaming ladies; lobster salad appeared, millions of cakes, ice cream in molds, chicken patties, professional and perfect catering. When enough had been eaten and drunk rugs were thrown back and the Victrola given a December dance record to chew; vice-president grasped deacon's wife, contralto paired with cashier, and Dimchurch danced with the abandon of Alexandria.

After a while the word got round that Mary "played"; she was dragged to the piano amid protestations; people clapped and draped themselves over furniture and the floor. Seeing they were somehow in earnest, she let loose; she gave them Chopin first, then Beethoven and Brahms and Schumann, and Dimchurch fairly ate it up. It seldom heard anything like it, but it knew. It applauded wildly and called for more and more. But just at the right moment, just one instant before people began to get tired, she stopped; her eyes glowing, she thumped out a carol,

"The First Noel"; the choir joined in, others followed; the house rocked.

"Well," said Kit, as they lay in the dark in the early four-poster, "it was a good party. It went. But it was you that made it go. Don't tell me! Lord, how you did hit those people right! You were marvelous, simply marvelous."

"It's not so hard," said Mary sleepily, "to be marvelous on the income of two million. But"—she stirred, and her voice dropped very low—"I knew it was in me. I knew, I knew it was . . ."

II

Mary left the day after Christmas, but Kit stayed on as he had planned. He sat facing Uncle Jeff over his substantial oak office desk—there was no mahogany in the Works—and heard all about it. It was the reverse side of the painful decrease in industrial dividends which Kit had noticed during the past year, and it was the old story of over-expansion, high wages and high prices followed sharply by a falling market, under-production, unemployment and a growing feeling of panic. Uncle Jeff, as he told the tale, lost all his holiday gayety and looked more than his age, which was seventy.

"It isn't the bad times that I mind so much," he said. "Bad times come, and they go. They follow every war. They're nowhere near as bad now as they were after the Civil War. But I'm getting toward the end of my time, and I don't see how I can see the thing through to the good days. The directors feel, though they don't say it, that we need a younger man at the head. I shall tell them at the next meeting that as soon as they can pick their man I shall step

aside. The only thing is, where shall we find the man? I've sounded out one or two of the Board, and they haven't a notion. There aren't any rising young fellows in the Works, that's the trouble. I've made it a one-man show; I've known how to run it, and gone ahead, and been fool enough not to get hold of a bunch of youngsters and educate them for the job. It's my fault. I might have known. But I've always—"

"You've always thought I'd come in at last," said Kit. "Poor Uncle Jeff. But I've never given you any encouragement."

"No, Kit, I don't blame you a particle. But—I just couldn't get over the notion. It doesn't—it doesn't appeal to you any more now?"

Kit shook his head. "No," he said bitterly, "nothing appeals to me these days. This never did, but other things did once. I was a kid when you last saw me, full of life and interest. Life was a choice of pleasant possibilities then. Now it's more like a choice of unnecessary evils."

Uncle Jeff nodded. "Lots of men are at a loose end now. So are a lot of businesses. I admit I had some hope we could join up our two frayed ends. You're so young—you'd have a few years of hard times, but youth doesn't mind that, when it's got its back up, and then there'd be long years of steady prosperity. The stock's fallen ten points in the last three months. It's worth seventy now. That's not so bad, but we've got to skip this quarter's dividend, and it'll go down further. You'd want to buy my interest, most likely, if you came in, and I'd hate to sell out to you at seventy when it'll probably be down to fifty in six months. It's better for you to wait, really."

"I wouldn't consider that," said Kit. "What's keeping me back is this confounded lassitude. That, and the fact that I could never be any use to your business, without years and years of training."

"But, man," said Uncle Jeff with spirit, "that's just where you're wrong! It's the presidency I'm offering you. Any man with plain horse sense and a general knowledge of business can be at the top. Do you think I could hold down the job of my own sales manager, or my shipping manager, or any of the big production positions? Not for a day. Those are the expert jobs, those are the ones that take years of training. They get as high salaries as I take myself, and I'd willingly pay more if it was necessary. I tell you, with a year or two of working in the various departments and studying figures and getting to know the business, two years *at most,* you could do all that I'm doing and do it better than I. Don't tell me—you couldn't have done what you did on that island and not be able to run a two-for-a-cent hardware shop as well as the best."

"Thank you," said Kit. "But if good business men are as common as all that you ought to have no trouble in finding one."

"Yes, but how many do you think I'd take up—adopt? It's practically that. Hang it, Kit, do you think this thing is just a machine to me? My father and I together have worked in this job for seventy years, and you can't do that without coming to feel a little sentiment for it. The president of this concern means something, not only to it but to the whole town. It's not every whippersnapper, smart young business man I'd consent to set up in my place. No, you can't laugh it off. To go down to the grave without leaving any one I can trust to carry on after me,

it's hard, that's what it is. . . . But I'm not blaming you, my boy. I've no right to unload my troubles on you."

So forty years of work in this little hole had not shorn Uncle Jeff of what might be called ideals. It occurred to Kit that the old man had been to Dimchurch for a lifetime very much what he, Kit, had been to Nairava for six months. . . .

Well, why not be it to Dimchurch for the rest of his days?

Things were so extraordinarily involved. Given his undergraduate state of mind, and also his Nairava experience, he would probably have taken up the offer. But Nairava was inseparable from the months of futility and bitterness that followed it and now pervaded it as well as everything else. Once he had said he did not feel responsible for the manners and morals of the people of Dimchurch. He had felt responsible for the manners and morals of Nairava, and the vanity of the sensation had become horribly apparent. The sardine episode returned to his mind with blasting insistence. Put him in Dimchurch, in the position made for him by Uncle Jeff, and what had he to look forward to but a whole lifetime of sardine episodes, translated into New England industrial terms?

Responsibility was an impossible, futile thing, a snare for conscientious minds. What was life but a succession of days, each to be survived expediently and separately? Daughters of Time, the hypocritic days—Emerson. Nonsense. They pretended to offer you stars, but if you chose these they turned to pebbles. Nairava, that had seemed a star, was now a pebble. He was not fool enough to think that Dimchurch was any better.

The thing that had chiefly repelled him from Dim-

church in the old days was now the strongest argument for it; the chance of making money. He had ceased to think of himself as rich since his marriage. The income tax ate up an enormous annual sum, and prices had doubled and trebled since before the war. The doing over of the house had cost a lot; Mary had to dress and entertain and have a car and chauffeur; the prohibition price of liquor was something appalling. They were living up to the hilt of their income already. Dimchurch would reduce their living expenses and presently increase their income. But give up New York? Not much. What was the use of money, if you had to spend it in a Connecticut mill town?

And that gave him another jolt. In two short years had life degenerated into a grasping after enough money to give him a good time? The reactions of college kicked faintly in his mind; he recognized them, hated them—and then hated them for not being stronger.

III

One morning, after vainly trying to write about Nairava for an hour, he seized a piece of paper and scrawled the following:

"When the history of this post-bellum mess is written, probably the easiest time and the finest performance will be attributed to those young people who came out of the war without money and had to find something to do, quick. Those fellows who strolled into town a year ago, fit and cheery in their uniforms, drank themselves into a stupor, woke up, took the first job they could find and are now seen sitting in club windows, pasty-faced and lined, talking about the price

of coal—they're the ones to admire. Those girls who forgot to jazz, settled down into three-room apartments without a maid, swore over burnt food and now meet to exchange criticisms of maternity hospitals—they are the heroines of this age. Damn them all. But they're the happiest of us, and deserve to be.

"Those who made money in the war, or had it anyway, and could pick and choose and amuse themselves, they won't get much credit. But, God! they suffered, some of them. The idle *can* suffer, first for being idle, second for having time to suffer in.

"But those that suffer most are the ones who used to cherish the visions of better things that we call ideals. It's a strong man who can keep an ideal now—and who lives that can make one valid to the world? Look at Wilson. The front page of every newspaper nowadays is proof that we have none, and poison to any we might retain. And the ideal-fed minds are dying of starvation, or learning to live on poison, and growing fat.

"Oh, but it isn't all dead. I know that those visions will lead men again, and some of them, at last, will become facts and triumph. And no thanks to me. The hour of need and trial, and I idle and impotent—oh, God! what hope is there? What reward?"

IV

The outside life went on, faster and more steadily than ever as he felt the increasing need to forget. In it he followed Mary; the visit to Dimchurch marked the point where she passed him, definitely, in ability to use money and realize social values. She made the plans, answered and sent out the invitations, mapped out the budget, chose the people and decided when

to go home. With it all she kept an apparently untouched reserve, both mental and physical; she never seemed tired or bored or in doubt, and she kept time for at least an hour's practice every day.

She enjoyed herself, he discovered, and she did so well and was so intelligent and sane about it all that he could not grudge her her enjoyment. He thought she probably had an ideal of wealth, and was enabled to realize it the better now for her youth of economy and discipline. The ideal comprised gayety, freedom, a certain crispness of mind and urbanity; above all urbanity. It wasn't a wholly bad notion: come, good friends, let us enjoy the best there is in the world and each other, and forget the rest. But there was something more to it, he thought. Why Schumann every morning, especially preceded by finger exercises? He could not see what they contributed to social uses; she almost never played to people in New York and her talent seemed out of key in their life. When he asked her, she merely said that she loved music, now that it wasn't the main thing in her life. She added that art could never be the one all-important thing in anybody's life, except for a very few, and they were geniuses, or at least artists. But in its place it was delightful.

Kit thought of the number of people they went round with in whose lives art played no part whatever, primary or secondary, and decided that he had married a rather remarkable woman. She was likely to be very unhappy, some time, when she discovered the sort of man she had married. Meanwhile it was just as well that she shouldn't think about it.

V

He would wake up somewhere between nine and twelve in the morning and almost always find himself alone in the room. Frequently he could hear Mary's laborious Czerny, or phrases out of Brahms or Chopin, filtering up from the drawing room. She was generally out before he came down, and he would not see her till late in the day; in that case he would usually find a note on the breakfast table:

"I lunch out to-day, and *so do you.*

"Nothing this afternoon you have to bother about.

"Dinner here, 7:30. Dyers, Marie Chavaux and some others. Get some bridge cards, there's a dear. All ours are filthy.

"Hoffingtons', music. Drummonds' dance, Plaza. I told Elizabeth and George Carey we'd meet them at the Rendezvous around two. Got a clean shirt? —M."

He would ascend to his old bedroom, which he now used as a study, light a pipe and sit down before his typewriter. In fifteen minutes he would be at the telephone, arranging for a squash game in the afternoon or making an appointment with a lawyer or a tailor or answering a call for Mary. One piece of telephonic business suggested another, and he soon came to the conclusion that it was so near lunch time that he wouldn't bother about his book.

Lunch was at one of the clubs, almost always with somebody. And there was generally some one to talk with afterwards till at least three. Then he would wander into the library and pick up a book or a magazine; no hurry, nothing this afternoon but squash. And Mary's bridge cards. And call up Cooper to see about his shirts.

By the time he came to, it was too late for anything but his squash appointment. When it wasn't squash he had to have his hair cut, or look in on some damnable boring tea party he hadn't had the sense to get out of. If he waited in the club till five o'clock he was always sure to get caught in a bridge game, and would rush out of the building with his coat tails flying, at 7:25.

Dinner was a time of relaxation; Mary on deck; everything perfect. Bridge, mixed bridge for small stakes, soporific stuff. At eleven or so they would make a general exodus to some private party.

Whirling about with jiggling little flappers, silent, *distraites,* awkward, apparently not enjoying themselves. He did not enjoy them particularly, either, but always danced with them, for no reason that he could make out, except that he was only twenty-five.

Often in the ballroom and invariably in the coat room some of the younger men could be observed under the influence. Spasm of revulsion; wasn't good form in *my* day. Oh, well, your day is past, my boy. Youth will be served. All due to prohibition.

Frequent little nips, from the host's supply, if possible, as he wanted to save his flask for later. By midnight a feeling of ease; by one o'clock, one of elation. The smell of lilies of the valley, gardenias, roses; white arms, soft rugs, loud Ethiopian rhythms. After all, this was life, of a sort—and not such a bad sort, either. Well, where do we go next?

Always, invariably, a friendly nod from the commissionnaire at the door and another from the head waiter. On this point he prided himself, at least till next morning. A nice table, not too near the music or the serving door; gin and ginger ale, possibly cham-

pagne, if some one was sufficiently familiar with the powers of the place.

There would be from four to eight in their own group, and others would wander over from other tables, after the first spasm of dancing was over. There would be various familiar figures representing Wall Street, Fifth Avenue, Broadway and the Village; the most numerous and interesting were the Broadway ones. Luke Silverstein; was he wearing his emeralds? The Wentworth Sisters! weren't they *sights?* Talk, drink, dancing, wandering off to other tables. Introductions. Extraordinarily attractive Frenchwoman, with hair all over her eyes; didn't catch her name; countess, or actress or something. Amusing fellow with the big lower lip; pretty raw story he told about the church warden. Mary didn't laugh. Strange youth with the yellow hair; awfully knowing look about the eyes. Only twenty-two, they said, and what didn't he know? Must be talented some way, or why should Silverstein listen to him so?

Flappers that ought to be at home and in bed, accompanied by rat-headed youths. In *his* day . . . Mary said she'd tell their Mamas, but she never did. Once she dragged one out, though, and took her home in their car. Sweet of her. Angel.

(*Angel!* Scent of some sweet flower, ever so faint; Vi always had it. Where was Vi now? In bed and asleep, *hoffentlich*—it was six or seven in the morning over there. Yes, asleep. Dawn breaking over one white arm . . .)

The Show. He had seen them all, but they were always easy to watch. Hyperbolic costumes, always grasping after the extremes of strangeness, extravagance or exposure; some occasional talent in a dance or comic song. If there was no show in the place,

one could watch the dancing for a long time without saying much. Then often, if the crowd were right, there would arise a discussion on the Catholic Church or the Soviets or Modern Morals. If alone with a woman, one could always start something by leading the conversation to a certain point and then asking brightly: "But do you really think there's any such thing as love?" Usually she would reply: "You ought to know, you're married," and the answer to that was either "Let's leave personalities out of it" or "Yes, but the question is, isn't it all really an illusion?" He learned the openings as a chess player learns the Queen's Gambit and the Ruy Lopez. It was diverting, especially if she were a little afraid of you.

Some time between three and six there would be a calling for the account and a general break-up. He would feel stiff on getting up, but unbelievably calm and seasoned. He might stagger a little on the way out, from pure fatigue, of course. Occasionally they would go on to somebody's apartment for music, talk and breakfast, but more often they would call it a day and go home. The chauffeur looked tired; why didn't he give notice? Wouldn't call him before noon; tell him so. Mary sleepy, too, very quiet. Her body thrown against his as the car flopped around corners. Mary was fine, never lost her temper—not even with that fellow with thick lip. Should *he* have lost it for her, perhaps? Nope. Leave it to her.

"Mary, you pretty tired, too?" Her hand on his, and a faint smile. Won'ful woman.

So many front steps; why wasn't the house English basement? There, knew I could find that keyhole! The cool light hall. Halfway upstairs, something wrong. Oh, Mary. She was standing at the foot, looking up. "Come on, why don't you!" "You go

ahead, I'll follow." She had to turn out the light and walk up in the dark. Why no reversible switch? Fool built this house, perfect fool. Uncomf'table all over, somehow. Never mind. Bed.

VI

One night in May he sat in a booth at one of those places and listlessly watched the dancing. It was not quite midnight, and he was dead sober, having spent the evening at a musical comedy. He glanced up at Mary, with whom he was alone for the moment. "Dance?"

"No," she said. "I'd rather watch. I feel rather tired."

It was a large, exotic room they were in, entirely sealed in peach-colored silk. Walls, ceiling and even the lights were covered with it. In the middle was the dancing floor, which rose in steps at one end to a small stage; around the bare floor were tables, and behind these again, raised about a foot and distributed in booths, were more tables. Here and there in the decorations appeared the keen silhouette of a flying rabbit, in dead black. Le Lapin Noir, that was the name of the place. Kit wondered if there were some symbolism in it. He had wondered twenty-seven times that season.

"There's Maud Hoffington," said Mary, watching a party of five take their places in a booth opposite.

Kit looked, and yawned. "I thought they'd gone abroad."

"Next week. Who's that extra man?"

"Fellow she's going to marry, perhaps. Detroit. Oodles."

"I don't think so, or he wouldn't be extra. Hardy,

that one's name is." Mary abandoned Maud, and turned to her husband with some measure of briskness. "See here, Kit, what about us this summer? Are we going abroad?"

"On the yacht? Can't afford to go any other way, after the expense of putting it in commission."

"That's so, the yacht.—Kit, why did you bother about the yacht?"

"I don't know. Thought you'd like it. You don't?"

"I merely said I didn't believe I'd be seasick. Only . . . are we going to get our money's worth out of it? . . . Well, we might play round with it this summer. Take a small house near the water somewhere. And then go over on it toward the end of August. Is that practical?"

"You can go anywhere on it, if you can stand the rolling."

"Well, we might try it. And then I'd sort of like to stay over for some time, perhaps all winter. We could use the yacht in the Mediterranean. We might take a house somewhere down there, a villa."

Kit felt his blood slowly freeze and his wrists go stiff. He turned and stared at her, fascinated. "Where? At—Cannes, for instance?"

"Yes. Or along the Italian coast; it's cheaper there . . ."

She went on calmly, so far from him, so far. Why couldn't she see how she was hurting him, and stop?

"But we can't!" he broke in, sitting up. "We can't afford the time, let alone the money. There's my work, my—profession . . ."

He stopped dead as he saw her smother a smile. "Why, yes, there is that, I suppose." Her voice was very kind, but her eyes said: "Your *work?* Did I hear you right? Your work?" She went on, still more

kindly: "Of course, dear, if you intend to work, that's that. Go ahead."

He jerked his eyes away from her; it was impossible to explain. Why couldn't she understand? Couldn't she see that he wanted to work, desperately, *and couldn't?*

A chill of fear came to him as he saw how hopeless it all was. He had married her because he loved her, and she him; because she was the one anchor of hope and faith in the new world. And here she was, miles away, completely cut off from him, with no idea of the torment in which he was.

She could have no notion, and he could never give her any, of what his six months on Nairava, that one splendid focus of his most vital impulses, had been to him. She did not know that at the end Captain Fiske-Dunning had offered him the chance to stay on in the same position, and he had refused with the words "I have other things to do," thereby promising to make his subsequent life an improvement on Nairava. She could have no idea of the horrible way his subsequent life had degenerated and failed. Impassivity, paralysis, fastidiousness, drink, midnight cafés—and a villa at Cannes! The crowning touch.

As though at a cue from Satan himself a band of ukuleles set up a wailing, and down the steps from the stage undulated a file of women, painted brown and dressed in straw skirts. They gathered in the middle of the floor and executed a perfectly conventional Hawaiian dance. None of them had ever been nearer Hawaii than Omaha, and everything was wrong, but still there were traces in it of the pulse and passion of those moonlight *ruoios*. It was the more poignant and awful for the very differences; it was like a travesty of his efforts and visions on that

island. "I," the music said, "I that was strong and wise am weak and foolish; I that was clean am foul, I that was a living soul am clay. I that was King, King over hundreds, have lost my crown and am no more King even over myself . . ."

He shook his head and stood up; the thing was intolerable. He muttered something to Mary, went out and stood on the doorstep, inhaling deeply of the fresh night air. To-morrow he would do something, something, anything. Enter the Columbia Law School, get a job with Dick Hoffington, join a newspaper as a cub reporter, sweep a crossing. Anything—except a villa at Cannes!

VII

As he stood there two familiar figures suddenly loomed up: Boon and Cora Baxter. Kit had not seen Boon since last summer, and had no idea he was in America. And indeed, Boon explained, he had only landed that morning.

He bore them off to his table, where there were others besides Mary; they sat down, laughing and festive, but rather tongue-tied. At last the other couple went off to dance, and Cora turned toward Mary.

"Well," she said, laughing foolishly, "we may as well tell you."

"No!" shouted Mary. "You don't mean it!"

"We do." There were more shouts and clasping of hands, during which Cora went on: "You see, Boon's on his way to a mine in Alberta, and thought he might as well look me up as he passed through. And we talked, and one thing led to another, and I decided I'd better go to Alberta with him. Can you

beat it? I shall fall in love with the Mounted Police and make moonshine whisky and wear riding breeches till you can't tell me from Lenore Ulric! Oh, it's all so *ridiculous!*" She laughed. There was something beautiful about her; she was a girl again, the little Cora Vandermyll before the chauffeur came, before her first party.

"Of course it's just the utter impossibility of the thing that decided us. Boon's poor as a church mouse, won't come into Quayne for perfect centuries, if then, and had no *idea* of marrying me. He wanted an heiress, and I wanted a peer. But the thing that really settled it was the thought of me in Alberta. My God! Can you see it? The Little Queen of the mining camp!"

"I can see you wherever he is, you ridiculous thing," said Mary. "You're as in love as I ever saw two people. You're dears, both of you."

(Oh, yes, Mary could understand readily enough about Cora and Boon. It was always so simple, as to other people. "A loves B"; what could be more beautiful and self-explanatory? When it came to "I love you" and "You love me," that was where the difficulty began.)

He congratulated them, for his part, with the detachment with which he might have congratulated Romeo and Juliet. They were all right; they would be that absurd thing, "happy." No Nairava, no pledges to the future, no dethroned kings, no villa at Cannes. The world was in luck, except for Kit Newell.

(And Mary Vane . . .)

"By the way," Mary was saying, "I wonder how well pleased Vi Fieldes will be over this?" and Boon laughed.

"Oh, Vi," he said with easy pity, "she's got troubles of her own, poor Vi. You heard about her shop? Well, she set up an establishment, a millinery thing of sorts, in Bond Street last autumn. Tiny little two-by-four place, most awfully smart. There was a regular sign over the door—'The Viscountess ffieldes, Robes'—two small ffs and all. Every one laughed and went in and ordered a chimmie or something, and then forgot about it. Well, she had a dishonest assistant, and of course poor Vi herself never knew a half crown from a florin, and the long and the short of it is the whole thing went to pot. She lost horribly by it, nearly everything she had, and she wasn't so badly off, considering. She's in despair, and is out for an American millionaire. 'I'm desperate!' she goes about saying. 'I'm going to spend my last cent on a passage to America, and I'll take the first millionaire I can get. Any one—a coal heaver, if he's got the cash!' Poor Vi."

Kit sat with his hands in his pockets, speechless. So Vi was coming over. He would see her.

The room felt cold; he shivered. But he was going to see Vi. And he knew that he wasn't going to look for a job—yet.

CHAPTER XV

I

NEXT morning he sat biting his nails in his study, and the thought of Jack kept coming to him. It made him intensely miserable. What would he not give for half an hour of Jack's freshness and youth amid the idiocies and boredoms of his present life!

On a sudden impulse he went to a bookcase and took out a certain volume, a very familiar one, Matthew Arnold's poems. He opened it at the fly leaf, on which was his name in his own handwriting, crossed out, and under that a long inscription.

New Kittle
from
Cheltenham Bold

Christmas, 1913.

The bright boy, having seen Matthew Arnold's name in a newspaper or somewhere, conceived a desire to drink of that Pierian Flood. Which I, deeming a laudable thirst, proposed to gratify in the form of a Christmas gift; but the impulsive youth, having far too large an allowance and too small a respect for the Holy Season, went forth and procured himself this volume. This parthenogenetic act I, hating, have this day undone, exorcised and nullified by giving to the same New Kittle the sum of one Bean and threescore Small Porgies ($1.60), such being the market price of the book, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged by him. By which act of grace These Verses become my gift to him. *Quod felix faustumque sit.*—J. C.

Jack had scrawled that one evening in the following January, apparently having only just discovered that Christmas had occurred. Kit remembered how he looked as he wrote it, sitting with his knees hunched up in his chair, biting a pipe stem and smiling scornfully to himself. It was so like Jack, superabundant, awkward, puppy-like; but at the same time full of vitality and nice feeling.

He turned on and read snatches here and there. A real poet, Arnold; that early taste of his had been sound. But now he read as he might have read his own epitaph, with pity, perhaps, and a musing wonder, but no emotion.

All at once his eye fell on certain lines:

> Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live *alone* . . .
>
> But when the moon their hollows lights,
> And they are swept by balms of spring,
> And in the glens, on starry nights,
> The nightingales divinely sing;
> And lovely notes from shore to shore
> Across the sounds and channels pour—
>
> Oh! then a longing like despair
> Is to their farthest caverns sent;
> For surely once, they feel, we were
> Parts of a single continent!
> Now round us spreads the watery plain—
> Oh, might our marges meet again!

So pertinent this was to his own case that it made him groan. He knew, if man ever knew, how it felt to be on an island. First on Nairava, physically, geo-

graphically isolated, that longing like despair had wrung him; and now in his own home, among his own friends, in the very presence of his beloved wife, he knew it again. He knew it in a spiritual sense only, but all the more rending and mordant for that. Hard it was to be lonely out there, but how much more tragic to be lonely among friends—separated from those he loved and could touch by that shoreless watery wild dividing mind from mind. Tragic, hopeless . . .

Then revulsion: a human being was not like geography. It was a person's own fault if he could not find his continent. Yes, *his* fault. And then, turning over the pages, he came on this:

> But in the world I learnt, what there
> Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
> That will, that energy, though rare,
> Are yet far, far less rare than love.

There it was. It took will and energy to find one's continent, and even these, though commoner far than the gift of love, he lacked. He had had them, and lost them—wasted, destroyed! Oh, was there no end to weakness and pain?

In a burst of anger he flung the book across the room. He sat staring at it a moment, then slowly went over and picked it up. An absurd vision came to him of Mrs. Ebbsmith pulling the prayer book out of the fire. . . . There the book lay in his hand, unscorched, unharmed, except for a new looseness in its back. Again it became lost youth incarnate, irrevocable.

Oh, Jack, that the sweetness of those days should ever taste so bitter! Oh, Mary, that the wonders of love and marriage should, through his own inadequacy,

remain so far from him! He sat back in his chair and groaned again. Lonely, lost, helpless, adrift forever on that "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea" of human weakness, across whose devious currents even now, faintly, maddeningly, the nightingales divinely sang . . .

Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!

II

In all the world Jen Cobb was the one who came nearest to understanding. Jen had been beautifully kind to him all along, but even Jen was becoming impatient.

The matter of Len Thomson and his California school recurred this spring. Len still hoped to start it in the autumn, but he had not yet succeeded in finding a suitable partner, and he implored Jennings to use his influence on Kit. Jen tried to.

"He'd better speak for himself, John," snapped Kit. "After all, he's met me."

"Poor man, he was afraid you'd take his head off," said Jen. "Your temper isn't exactly mellowing with the years."

Kit flushed. "I suppose there's no excuse for that, in your mind? Just plain cussedness?"

Jen's eyes, gray-blue and insignificant, briefly acquired a rather lovely look. "Kit, I make every allowance for you. Whatever is the matter, and I've no idea what it is, I know it's hell for you. But I thought six months might have changed your attitude toward the school proposition."

"They haven't, a particle. I have less Messianic impulse toward boys than I ever had, if possible. You

and Len are ridiculous. You think of me as nosing around saying, 'Oh, dear, I've no one to feel responsible for! Give me some one to guide and comfort, quick!' Lord! I tell you, I fairly hate the idea of those boys, and they'd hate me the minute they saw me."

"They'd have a right to, if you did."

"Oh," said Kit, "every one has that right. Including myself . . ."

They were in Kit's study, on a misty afternoon. Jen filled a pipe, lighted it and said: "Kit, isn't that it, perhaps? Hate generally?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The uselessness and ugliness of hate. Why hate any one, even yourself? Why hate hypothetical little boys? After all, we're nothing but a bunch of nitwits, even the best of us. You're no worse than the average."

"Well?"

"Well, why not go out and try it? Have a little of the—of what Jack used to call the m. of h. k. Go out and face those kids—realize they're young and helpless and like yourself generally, and see if you can't . . . you know."

"You'll bring in 'moral purpose' in a minute," said Kit blightingly.

Jen's eyes gave a certain gleam. "And suppose I did?"

"I mightn't be polite.—I tell you, it's no use. Just because I've nothing to do I won't set up to save the world. I've got some honesty left, at least, and self-respect, and I won't do a thing that I hate so that the world can sit around and say 'How noble.' When I do that, my name is mud."

This was papier-mâché, as he well knew; there was

no cause for indignation and he was refusing to join Len because he preferred New York to California. And Jen knew it also. He got up, and his eyes met Kit's terribly.

"Did you ever stop to think," he asked, "what your name actually *is?* And what it means?" Then he walked out of the room and the house.

III

One morning early in June the expected happened. He chanced to be breakfasting with Mary, and she handed him a missive which she found in her mail. It consisted of a small white card on which was engraved in script

The Viscountess ffieldes

and under that, added in pencil, the simple legend "Hotel Plaza."

A council of war ensued. It was clear that Vi was throwing herself on them in time of need. Mary was a little caustic, failing to see quite why the mercy of casual American acquaintances should be preferred to that of friends nearer home. But on second thoughts she decided to be kind; to call on Vi, try to find her a millionaire. Perhaps, she added, ask her to the house. Also she confessed to a secret affection for two small ffs, and remarked (Kit could not but admire her honesty) that Viscountesses looked pretty well over here, however they looked at home.

Kit went out for the day hoping (1) that he would never see Vi Fieldes again as long as he lived; (2) that he would find her installed in the best spare bedroom when he came in. The latter wish was granted.

Mary informed him that Vi was in the house and also using her (Mary's) maid, not having one of her own any more. Probably nothing could have given Kit a more vivid idea of her poverty.

The three spent the evening alone in the house, the gayeties of the season having considerably waned. Vi had left off mourning and appeared in an exceedingly smart little frock of robin's-egg and mauve. She was oh! so brave, and laughed with heroic shrillness as she announced that she only had six hundred pounds a year to her name. There was a good deal of hilarious but semi-serious discussion of prospects; names of eligible bachelors and widowers were mentioned, discarded, approved. Dinner was rather pleasant.

And then presently came the moment when Mary went to the piano and the two others sat side by side on a brocade and rosewood sofa. Vi looked like a very young girl as she lay back and listened, and in point of fact she was only twenty-five.

"Oh, this is *too* angelic of you!" she breathed, her eyebrows flying into their incredible arch. "Seraphs, both of you. You don't know what I've been through. Appalling. Simply appalling." She pressed the back of her hand to her eyes.

"Not the money, you know," she said, quickly drawing it away again. "I could stand being poor. 'Twas the people—the way they laughed. Fiends! It was funny to them, 'parently. Why? I ask you, why? Is there something so screamingly amusing in poor wretched little Vi Fieldes being ruined? 'S not, mind you, as if I'd ever put on *side* . . ."

She proceeded on a sweet and staccato arraignment of the British upper classes, the new rich, the Government, taxes, Germany and the entire science of economics; then at a bound became personal again.

"And so, Kit, angel, I thought of you. You see, you have *hearts* in America. Always felt that with Americans, always. Darlings."

Kit said he was glad she was pleased.

Violet hesitated, fingering a chain of pearls and sapphires from which depended her eyeglass. "Kit, seraph. This—about Tibby. It's true, is it?"

"Quite. They're to be married next week."

Violet closed her eyes and sighed gently. Nothing could express the depth of her resignation or her lack of bitterness.

"Kit, I feel—I feel I must tell you. You *und'stand.* But you mustn't blame Tibby—oh, no! 'Twas fate. Oh, fate's an appalling thing, Kit! Oh, Kit, you lucky beggar! Never been disappointed, have you?"

"Well, perhaps not in that particular way."

Violet closed her eyes once more, shivering. "You see, he'd promised to meet me at Sturton—the Lemmings'—and . . . see? And he didn't come. Simply didn't come. Not a word. Not one. I cried—Heavens! But you won't blame Tibby, now? Promise!"

Kit promised, with a fairly easy conscience.

"That's right!" said Vi, apparently immensely relieved, and gave a little flop toward him. Her hand fell lightly on his thigh. "You're *rather* a dear. Oh," she breathed, just audibly, "what Heaven this is, *Heaven!* Friends. Real friends, at last."

She was so absurd and infantile, sprawling there with closed eyes, that she appealed to him. He bent his head quickly and kissed her.

Then things became different, as her eyes opened wide in reproach, which was superfluous, and warning, which was discordant. "Kit, angel! Mary!" She glanced toward the piano.

Mary had not seen them, being turned away, but if she had it would not have mattered in the least. He had kissed Vi as he might have kissed a puppy, or at least in the jocular sort of way that a man can kiss a woman in his wife's presence. Vi did not see that, and was merely anxious that Mary should not have seen. That made it bad.

He knew it was bad, but as he turned to look at her in regret and surprise he suddenly found that he wanted to kiss her again, and not in any way that one could possibly want to kiss a puppy. And that made it infinitely worse. He shuddered, and got up.

IV

Later that night he did what he supposed was a most difficult thing, though it did not seem so. He supposed that was because it was Mary who had first enlightened him on his feeling toward Vi. He came into their bedroom and said:

"See here, Mary, I'm afraid of that woman. It's better to have it out. I'm afraid of her."

Mary turned as she sat brushing her long black hair. "Who? Vi?"

"Yes. She's . . . queer. I can't have her round here. I can't be responsible if she stays."

Mary paused. "What do you want me to do about it?"

"Get her out of the house, as quickly as possible."

"But I've just got her into it, with your consent."

"Yes, I know, it'll be difficult."

Mary returned to her mirror. "Now let's see. To-morrow we go to Tuxedo, the Clarks', and Vi will just have to stay here alone. I told her that. From Monday till Thursday we'll be here again, and

then we go on to the Blaynes' at Glencove—by the way, there's a small house there that might do for us. I thought we could take Vi there—in fact I wrote and asked Julia Blayne if we might. There'll be a lot of people round, and Vi'll have to work for her millionaire, so you'll be pretty safe. That takes us till Monday, the fourteenth, with only next Monday to Thursday to bother about. Can't you go away for those days?"

"There's Cora's wedding, Wednesday."

"Yes, but that'll be easy. Stay on at the Clarks' till Wednesday morning—Hubert Clark loves to have some one to fish with. That'll keep you for ten days, and by that time I'll have some idea of how to get rid of Vi. Or she may be married."

This was what might be called constructive thinking, and he was grateful. But he sat down and watched Mary swiftly brushing her long dark strands with a sense of incompleteness, of waiting.

"The week after that," went on Mary, "the week of the fourteenth, we go to Newport, and undoubtedly I can get Vi asked there too, and you can stay away on business. Then after that—oh, your Commencement comes along then, doesn't it? You spoke of going."

"Yes. The yacht will be ready, and I thought we might use her."

"Well, then I don't see but what it'll be pretty easy for as much as three weeks. It really only leaves next Wednesday and the week-end at Glencove . . ."

Amazing woman. There was no more hysteria about this than about the planning of a bridge hand. He got up. "I'm—I'm glad you see it this way, Mary."

"I don't see any other way to see it," said Mary.

Fifteen minutes later she was asleep in the bed next his; he could hear her regular breathing. Asleep!

He knew little about women. But he was sure that in Mary's position—really an appalling position to place a wife in—Onauti would have made considerably more disturbance, and even Naouea a little more. Vi certainly would have, also Maud Hoffington. Assuming that they loved him, of course . . .

There was only one thing to think, and he thought it for two hours. But he had known, and he had no right to expect anything better. The day was not far off when she would see him for what he was, and cast him from her utterly.

V

(But Mary was not asleep, not till long after he was, though she measured her breathing to deceive him. Not much, with her heart pounding away as it was! Hope! Amid all the worry, distaste, fear, jealousy, at last, one solid hope. Ah, but the risk! The hideousness of waiting, pretending, standing back! The heart-breaking aloofness that it was ruin to break!

Still, there was hope now, and she finally went to sleep in its arms, a smile on her lips. When she woke up she smiled again, remembering. "Am I a fool?" she asked the morning. "Or am I really a rather clever person? I've always wondered. I've never known, but I'm going to, soon!")

VI

At breakfast a letter from Elise Newell:

"The Elms,"
Dimchurch, Connecticut.

DEAR KIT:

I feel I ought to write you about Father. Things have not gone well here this spring, and the Company has had a hard time meeting some of its Loans. Any other concern would have shut down, flat, till it had time to recoup, but Father would go on, on half time. He said the money had to come out of some one's pocket, and he didn't see why some of it shouldn't come out of the stockholders'.

On Tuesday afternoon he had a slight stroke, coming home in the car. He thought so little of it that we didn't call the doctor till after dinner, but that was what it was. He went straight to bed and has been there ever since, though he is to sit up to-morrow. The doctor says he will recover completely—from this one.

He and Mama both send their love. When are we to see you and Mary again?

Your affectionate cousin,
ELISE.

P.S. Papa is out of the Presidency, and the Board of Directors have elected a chairman, Mr. Vickars, for the time being. But Papa doesn't feel that that lets him out. He owns 52 per cent of the stock, and won't sell out because he feels sure it's going to fall even lower.

"Hm!" said Kit. "The break-up of the feudal system. She would put the most important part in the postscript," and he tossed the note to Mary.

"We might drop in there from New London," she remarked.

"Yes," said Kit, "as a kind of obsequy. We'd better."

VII

He scarcely saw Vi again till the day of Cora's wedding when, not knowing many of the guests, she

was thrown a good deal on his hands. He noticed that she did not seem to make much effort to meet other people, by way of acquiring her millionaire. He noticed it for a full hour, and then began to feel oddly uncomfortable. Just why had she come to America? Was there by chance anything . . . *personal* about it?

He felt strong to-day and wearily decided he had better make an effort. He could think of nothing better for it than a direct question.

"Vi," he said, at some mention by her of her voyage, "just what was your idea in coming to America?" They were sitting on the stairs of the ancestral patroon mansion in Westchester County; he was a step below her and looked up, expecting her to answer. But she said nothing, which was itself an answer. Also her eyebrows did not go up, but remained almost flat.

"See here," he said, making another effort, wriggling up toward her, "if you came for sympathy, all right. I know you're in a bad way, and God knows I feel sorry for any one that is. I know what bad ways are. But . . ."

She bent her head a little forward, and the motion gave the impression of keeping back tears.

"I mean, Vi," he went on huskily, "that that's all . . ." Still her unaccustomed silence, and he felt sure that she was nearly crying. He could not stand it; he got up, took her hand and led her away to dance.

If she had made the smallest advance, that would have been the end. He could have been fatherly. Her remaining stationary was exactly the one way to draw him on at that juncture, and she knew. That was danger.

That night, sitting alone by his study window after bedtime, he was very clear-headed about it. If this happened, he told himself, it would be the last straw. The kingship of Nairava, the strong hand over men and events that the word betokened, that was gone. The kingship of himself had fallen low, but some vestige of it remained. "I" still reigned over *I* to the extent that he had not yet done anything involving a permanent loss of self-respect. He was a *fainéant,* but no Caligula.

It was not as though he felt anything for her beyond physical attraction (and a certain innocent pity). It was not as though he did not love Mary. If he seriously loved Vi and did not love Mary, and acted accordingly, he could still, though sinning, be master of himself and of his own respect. But it was not that way, at all.

Vi's fascination was a curious thing. It was purely physical, but it was entirely different from the honest physical attraction implicit in Mary's arms. It was more subtle and less clean, and only worked when he was with her. When she was away she did not bother him, but when she was there there was something about her exaggerated slimness and suppleness, her clear unpainted complexion, her arched eyebrows, her narrow transparent hands—oh, unhealthy. Even to be married to that woman would be sin.

And it was all a matter of chance. To-day he had tried, the other night he had tried, but the time might come when he would be alone with her, and the fascination would be too strong. It would not be in him, he knew, to stand firm at the hardest moment.

The air that fell slowly in from the street was hot and lifeless, hotter than on many a summer night in Nairava. The Avenue stretched steelily below. It

was deserted, except for a limousine that occasionally hissed along it, or a taxi that rattled.

Sometimes, Kit thought, those swiftly-moving bodies down there collided and destroyed each other in a reciprocal impact. A muss, a fuss, a crowd of staring people; then garage men came and swept the débris away and the street was clear again. The passengers were taken to a hospital and patched up, and the cars were insured. Was it so different with people, in a collision of passions? A few stares and sniggers, then the smooth traffic of events once more. And the participants were insured, probably, somehow; he was too tired to reason it all out, but certainly he had not been ass enough to forget to insure himself. Staring people, drifting slowly away. Circumstance. Insurance. Nightingales . . .

He woke up with a start in the gray dawn. He had dreamed that he was sleeping in the Residenz and that the siren of a cruiser was blowing down in the lagoon; a doomlike sound, irresistible and final. But he was at home, in New York, and the blast of doom was only the blowing of a factory whistle, far to the east.

VIII

It was the yacht, more than any desire to flee from Vi, that made him carry out his plan of attending his triennial reunion. He was quite interested in the yacht, which had not been in commission for fifteen years. She was a fairly commodious craft, some seventy feet on the water line, schooner-rigged. She had been given a new auxiliary and a new mahogany launch, and presented a smart and attractive appearance in her fresh paint and polish. She reminded Kit of his

early youth, and he felt somehow sure that nothing unclean or unpleasant could occur on her. He also liked her name: *Arsinoe*.

He sailed up to New Haven alone on the Sunday, his idea being to entertain parties of classmates on her during the week and then sail on to New London for the boat race, there meeting Mary and Vi and two or three others. She could put up six comfortably. He had himself landed at dusk, took a taxi uptown, and found his class headquarters, garish with blue flags and electric lights, but empty of familiar faces. He signed his name in a book, was given an unintelligible bundle of blue and white cotton which he was told was a "costume," and assigned a room on the Campus. Thither he took his bag and his costume, dumped them on one of a row of three austere pallets and strolled out on the Campus again, wondering why he had come.

Wright Hall loomed before him, and automatically his eye sought a certain window. A light was burning in it, and he conceived a sudden desire to go up and look at the place.

He had on a blue serge suit and a straw hat; he carried a light cane and wore a stiff collar. He looked very much the man of the world, he reflected. Not thus had he roamed these haunts years ago, either in mind or appearance.

The door was wide open, the room empty. He walked into the familiar space. All the furniture was different, yet it gave precisely the same effect that his had. Youth and innocence still dwelt here.

He leaned against the window seat, his stick clasped in his two hands, and closed his eyes. Jack; the place breathed Jack. Surely now, if ever, Jack must be with him . . .

He heard a slight sound and wearily opened his

eyes. An undergraduate stood before him, in white pajamas and bare feet; he must have come in from the lavatory. Kit smiled, without moving. "Excuse me. This was my old room."

"Oh, yeah. Really!" The boy, a good-looking youth with dark hair and very young eyes, was embarrassed but sympathetic. "When was that?" he asked, leaning one hand on a chair and rubbing his feet together.

"Seven years ago."

"Oh! Quite some time."

"Yes," said Kit, "quite some time."

He paused a moment, then went on: "The boy I roomed with here died. That was why I came up. I wouldn't have been so sentimental otherwise."

"Oh, gee, that's too bad. In the war?"

"In the war. Aviation." He shuddered slightly, and stood on his feet.

"Don't go," said the boy, stirring. "Have a cigarette? Ah—wouldn't you like to sit down, and talk about it?"

Kit had no desire except to get away. "Thank you," he said, his mouth curving into a bitter smile, "I think not. It would hardly be interesting, either to you or to me. Good-night." He nodded and walked out.

IX

On the stairs he cursed himself. He had seen, before he turned, the color mount to the boy's face and his eyes waver; he was hurt. He almost turned back to apologize.

But he did not; he plodded on down the stairs and out on the Campus. He sat down on the rail fence, too peevish and savage even to light a cigarette.

Curse it, to have hurt some one who tried to be nice to him in that room, of all places! If Jack had ever meant anything to him he would not have allowed himself to do that. But Jack was dead to him, and he to Jack. He was himself, simply and only, and he was bad.

Globes of light floated on the dark cool breast of the Campus; down there in the darkness that was Vanderbilt he had looked on this place with Jack, the last time they were together. Kit shivered; he hated the place for reminding him of what he had lost. He rose to his feet; he would go back to his yacht and sail away in the night. . . .

A step sounded on the brick pavement behind him; it stopped, and a hand came down on his shoulder. "Well, Kit Newell! I'll be darned!"

He turned and beheld a classmate, one Rip Maddox, a popular, loud-mouthed rounder whom he had known in college and cared little for. Conventionality settled drearily down on him, and he plunged into one of those hectically cordial dialogues that occur between people united by circumstance rather than community of interest.

"Hello, Rip! Glad to see you. When did you hit the town?"

"Six o'clock. Say, I haven't see you since the war. Great stuff, that island of yours, and all!"

"Great stuff, yes. Let's see, what did you join?"

"Infantry. Seventy-sixth division."

"Got over, then."

"Sure did—some time! Only got out last August. —Say, what are you doing?"

"Now? Nothing."

"Come with me. There's a bunch over in a place on York Street—got some good Scotch going. Dick

Hoffington's there, and a bunch of others. How about it?"

Kit hesitated; the sight of the empty Campus decided him. Anything was better. "All right," he said. It was like a sigh.

X

It would be unprofitable to pursue him too closely through the next twenty-four hours. They were mostly waking hours, full and noisy: the class had not come to New Haven to sleep, and least of all of it that portion in which Rip Maddox moved. Kit's original idea of sleeping through the morning proved to be absurd. He had two roommates, each of whom had a quart and plenty of ideas of how to get more. At eleven he gave up trying to sleep, donned his cotton costume and staggered out, blear-eyed but ready. On just one thing he was determined; he was not going to return to the black sour loneliness of last night on the Campus.

There was talk of a picnic by the shore, but he paid little attention till he found himself driving to it in somebody's car. He found, on getting out of this, a hot sun, a bathing beach, baseball and flasks. He played baseball; hadn't he always played baseball? He dropped flies and roared with laughter. He bathed in his costume, and changed into a bathing suit while it dried. There was lots of good stuff for lunch.

Around four o'clock he found it necessary to climb a small tree. The tree was too small and broke; there ensued some interesting conversation with the owner, from which people irritatingly kept trying to pull him away. Then he was somewhere else, on the back seat of that same car. It was hot and sunny, and there

was much talk about a broken washer. It had nothing, he was repeatedly informed, to do with the Irish washerwoman; also that he could shut up about now.

At six he was lying on his bed in Durfee, and Rip Maddox, ridiculously sober, was trying to drag him off somewhere. They went in a car to a place where Rip wanted him to have supper with a whole lot of people, but he preferred to sit on the lawn and be sick.

When he woke up it was dark. Lights streamed from a row of windows; also singing, the blare of a band and the rattle of crockery.

"Why!" he said. "I'm sober. Gee, isn't it weird! And I'm hungry. Go in. Eat. Talk about Reconstruction."

His entrance made quite a sensation in the blue and white crowd. The word passed round that Newell was sober; he acknowledged the impeachment gracefully, then sat down to make it untrue. Shrill remarks began to fly about his island and his queens; some one started the "Old King Kit" song, and the whole class roared it. "Newell of Nairava!" some one cried, waving a glass. "Newell of Never-never!" shouted some one else; it was Dick Hoffington. "They called him Newell because they knew hell when he was there!" Other remarks followed, amid laughter, concerning his effect on the vital statistics of the island.

"No, no!" he cried, foggily laboring to his feet. "Speech, speech!" yelled people. "Give us a toast to the Queens!" As he found himself swaying before the laughing roomful his reaction died. "Aw, gee," he said on a high, silly note, "to hell with this King stuff. We're all kings here. All Yale men are kings!" He sat down, amid shrieks of applause.

What had stirred in him was dead; the room became a large indifferent blaze and blare. People were

continually passing behind him; once he heard a voice, Flash Merwin's: "Can't believe it's he, simply incredible." Flash was sober, dead sober; must speak to Flash.

They were electing a committee or something; that was dull; he went out. On the porch one could hear motors whirring, and some one mentioned The Rock. The idea inspired Kit; The Rock, quick! Why didn't somebody take him?

"Come back!" said some one, pulling him; "they're drinking to . . ."

Inside again, a solemn voice, amid silence: "—those who are not back to-night and will never come back, but please God, will never be far from us." Some one thrust a glass into his hand; it was Flash. "Flash!" he said sternly. "Want talk to you. You're a piker—"

"Drink!" said Flash softly. "Jack!"

The glass was on his lips, the whisky in his mouth; it tasted foul. "God, what stuff!" he squeaked, spitting it out. "Want to *poison* me?" He flung the glass away; it was thick, and bounded along the floor. He watched it despairingly. What had he done?

"Oh!" he moaned. "Oh . . ."

Flash's arm was round his waist. "Never mind, it's all right. Come along now, we'll go to The Rock."

He sat in the car, his head on Flash's shoulder, the cool wind combing his hair. "I'm popular," he informed himself. "I tell you, I'm popular. All fellows like me. Damn good fellow m'self. See?"

XI

He decided not to go on the roller coaster again, and sat on in the bright bare boarded room, drinking

beer. Blue and white figures, much bedraggled, sprawled about the room, varied with others, nondescript.

He sat before a table, looking down. The class costume involved a bareness of knee which in the case of his left leg had by now expanded almost from hip to ankle. "Why," he said approvingly, "that's a nice leg. Darned good-looking leg, that."

Some one gave a screech of laughter, and sat down on the limb in question. "Why, hello, Sadie!" he said; then threw back his head and laughed at the thought. Sadie in Savin Rock! "Your name isn't Sadie, I know," he reassured her gravely; "but the idea's the same, if you get me."

"Who says my name ain't Sadie?" retorted the girl perkily, tipping her feet up and down. "Course it's Sadie. You're a dumb-bell. 'Nother little drink won't do us any harm." She appropriated his beer.

It was a good while before he got rid of Sadie—or was it she that got rid of him? It was not entirely clear; he was going through a dark place in a boat, with his arms clasped round her; and when they came into the light it wasn't Sadie at all, but Rip Maddox.

"Oh, well," said Kit, "you're some one, anyway. How about some whisky? Beer on whisky, always risky; whisky on beer, never fear! There's whisky about here, don't tell me."

Rip did not tell him, but took him to a back door; then they proceeded to a white, brightly lit place and ordered ginger ale. Presently Flash turned up, flushed and heavy-lidded.

"Flash!" said Kit accusingly. "I'm 'shamed of you. First you were sober, and now you're tight. 'Shamed o' you. Schäme dich. That's Dutch."

"Talkin' o' tight!" said Flash scornfully.

"I was talkin' Dutch. Seriously, Flash, ought be shamed jerself. Tell Jen on you."

"Damn Jen! Gimme a highball."

"Drink a highball," mooed Kit, "at nightfall; Be good fellows while we—get off my leg—may. For to-morrow may bring—oh, damn you, if you must sit on my lap, sit straight."

He sat with his head on Flash's shoulder, almost crying because they were closing the place. "Drivin' us out," he moaned; "no place to go. Little black sheep that have gone astray; baa—baa—baa. Come, Rip; we'll go home."

Flash bumped against him as he got up and knocked him over. He had to be pulled up; his limbs were like lead when he stood on them again, yet curiously light also. He sprang forward.

"Look out!" called Rip. "Hurt yourself!"

"Oh, Rip," said Kit reproachfully, "I wouldn't hurt any one, I wouldn't, not even a fly. I'm not that kinda fella. Come on, we'll go. Good-night, all! Good-night, Rock! We're off!"

"I've got to stop in here," said Rip. "I'll catch up with you."

Kit went on, alone, toward the place where Rip had left his car; Flash and the others had gone before. All the lights were out and the place was dark; also the car was not where it had been. He sat down on a bench and waited for Rip; when he didn't come he got up and walked impatiently back for him. Lord, he was tired!

Rip wasn't there, and the place where he had left Rip wasn't there either. It was dark. Something was wrong. "Rip! Oh, Rip!" he shouted. "C'mon, you geezer! What's the matter with you?"

"Stop that noise," said a man. He wore buttons;

why, he was a policeman. Ridiculous. "I'm only callin' my friend," he explained patiently. "Damn fool's gone and got himself lost." "He isn't here," said the policeman, "and you can't call him, anyway. This is a respectable street. Move on."

Deeply injured, he moved on. It became increasingly difficult to work his legs, and he could not be too particular about direction. The street was a vista of blackness regularly punctuated by circles of greenish light. It looked like the Campus last night, and he hated it; but he would surely find Rip here. Each circle, as he came into it, proved empty.

"Oh, Rip!" he yelled. He turned around guiltily, saw the policeman looking back at him from a distance, and moved on.

It was mean of Rip to leave him like this, in a place where he could not use his voice to find him. His eyesight was poor, and his legs—they seemed to be getting paralyzed. They took him on absurd zigzags and up and down curbstones, over lawns. Soon he'd be there, though; the Campus wasn't so big. Here were some white pillars; not there. Oh, bed! A black dog appeared and smelt at his legs; dogs rescued lost travelers, with whisky round their necks. "Here, pup, give us a drink!" The dog moved off, growling. Oh, well, he was nearly there now.

He lurched on and found himself in a flower bed; there was a crisp crunch of iris leaves under his feet. This wasn't it, not quite. Here were stairs, though; *that* was it! Upstairs, and to bed. He mounted them, on all fours; one, two, four, sixteen; there! He pulled his senseless legs up the last one, and sprawled over.

CHAPTER XVI

I

MISS MYRA HAWKINS was forty-six years old, and she had lived them all in the house in which she was born, in West Haven. Except for occasional visits to her Uncle Edward in Hartford and her married sister in Torrington, and three or four trips to New York, she had never been away from the town of her birth. There were only the two daughters in the family, and now that her father was dead, Myra lived entirely alone with her invalid mother.

In 1891 she had put on a sprigged muslin dress with reeds in the skirt and sung in the chorus from *The Creation* at the High School graduation exercises. She was not bad-looking then, with her bright cheeks and soft brown hair, and Sandy Hull had kissed her as he took her home. But a month later Sandy Hull had gone to Spokane, and was now the father of nine children by a lawful spouse.

There were two others who got as far as making offers during the next ten years. But neither of them was as nice as Sandy, and her parents, especially after her sister's marriage in '94, grew more and more dependent on her. Samuel Hawkins had been a carpenter with a shop of his own, a selectman and a Presbyterian. He had saved money for forty years and refused to invest any of it at more than four per cent, so there was really no need for Myra to marry.

Myra had never "worked," except in so far as

cooking, house-keeping, spring-cleaning and furnace-tending for a seven-room house involve work. She might have worked without losing caste among the neighbors, but there was no need and she had plenty to do at home. Since the war, when four-per-cents had not gone as far as they used to, she had "taken in" a little fine sewing and sometimes made as much as seven dollars a week at it.

Mrs. Hawkins was seventy-six and a paralytic. She lay in her bed every day till two o'clock, when with Myra's help she moved to a chair in her front window and sat there till after supper. She complained a good deal, but not excessively or intolerably.

One of her crosses was early waking. She could never sleep a minute after dawn, and within half an hour her shrill voice pierced the sleep of her daughter in the adjoining room: "Myra! Myra, you 'wake? I'm 'bout ready for my tea. Open the window a mite, and give me my shawl."

The tea was one of Myra's crosses, as it required a fire in the kitchen stove. There was gas in the house, but it stank up, and as for the thermos bottle which the married daughter had given one Christmas, tea kept in it over night had a kinda stale taste. By seven in winter and six in summer the kitchen fire had to be started.

Myra had grown rather to enjoy her early rising, especially in summer, when the dew was bright in the back yard. In May the lilacs bloomed, and they never looked better than in the first sunlight; then came the roses and syringa in June and the althea in late July. Myra liked flowers, and always kept a bunch of them on the table by her mother's bed in a green glass vase.

One morning when the syringa was in full bloom she was downstairs and fully dressed at 6:01. She

made the fire out of paper and kindling which stood ready in a box; by the time she had drawn two inches of water in a kettle it was rumbling cheerily and was ready for three shovelfuls of coal. She got out a tray and placed on it a cup, saucer and spoon and a brown teapot. She dipped three teaspoonfuls of tea into the pot and left the cover off. She then opened the kitchen door, which gave eastward, directly on the back yard.

"No milk!" she observed sternly, surveying the bare step. The light morning air brushed past her, sweet with syringa; Myra, with her hand on the doorknob, stood a moment inhaling it. A black cat poured itself out of a basket under the kitchen table, stretched and passed slowly out of the door, rubbing against Myra's blue-checked gingham skirt. "Kitty, kitty?" said Myra absently, stroking the cat's side with her foot. The cat proceeded on its affairs.

Myra made certain researches in the ice box. There was a little cream left from yesterday's milk, but it smelt doubtful. If Tim Gallagher was much later her mother would have to use it, all the same. The kettle was heating nice. She decided to look down the street and see if Tim's cart was in sight.

She opened a door and passed into a narrow hall. On her left lay the dining room and beyond that the parlor, both with closed doors; on her right was the staircase, with its slim mahogany rail. The house had been built in 1842.

There were two narrow panes of glass in the front door, both curtained with white muslin. Through one of these, as she approached the door, she caught sight of something white lying on the porch. "What's the paper doin' here this early?" she thought sharply.

She unlocked the front door and threw it open. As

she stepped down to the porch her head jerked back and her arms went stiffly to her sides.

"Sakes!" she hissed.

The paper was no paper, but a man, a fella, recumbent on her 1842 front doorstep. He was clothed in blue and white cotton, and far from tidily. His back lay curved toward her. He was entirely motionless.

"Hi!" she called. "What you doin' there? Get out!"

The figure made no motion. Myra gingerly crossed the narrow porch and bent over, observing the creature's costume more carefully. "Some o' those Yale fellas from the Rock," she explained to herself.

She bent lower, sniffing delicately; then straightened again. "Here, you, yet outa here!" she said shrilly, giving the figure a light kick in the small of the back. "Drunk's a lord! Huh!"

Still no move from the fella. Anger deepened the lines on Myra's brow and reddened her face. She kicked again, more vigorously. "Hi there, wake up, will you, wake up! You can't stay here!" She raised her head toward a wagon that was bumping slowly up the street. "Hi, Tim Gallagher! Here's a fella asleep on my doorstep, drunk! Come and help me get him off!"

The figure was beginning to move and emit faint sounds of pain. Stirred by these, Myra proceeded to disembarrass herself of its proximity without waiting for Tim Gallagher. By dint of pushing and kicking, combined with vigorous grunts of "Now then! Land's sakes! Respectable people!" she propelled the figure to the edge of the steps, whence one smart final kick sent it rolling to the bottom. There it lay, amorphous and gasping.

Kit became aware of a horror of falling and bumping; one of those awful dreams—he had but to wake and it would stop. He awoke, and found it a fact, found himself sitting on a hard tar pavement with every joint in his body aching like sin, and dominated by a sort of Fury, arms akimbo, in blue-checked gingham, hurling down loud homely anathemas: "There now, let this be a lesson to you! I'll teach you to come and lie drunk on respectable people's front stoops, I will! Get up, now, and move along! Quick, or I'll call the police! D'you hear me, you drunken beast?"

There was a man present also, a youth of perhaps twenty, in blue overalls with a white bottle in his hand. He greeted the anathemas with a low sound not unconnected with mirth; then these were broken by a faint noise as of wailing from above. The Fury reached forth her hand.

"Gimme that milk, Tim Gallagher, I got to get the tea. You tend to him. Get him outa here—the *brute!*" She flounced into the house, slamming the door behind her; the key clicked.

"Can you get up?" said Tim Gallagher, reaching down a freckled hand. Kit took it, and pulled himself to his feet; swayed; would have fallen but for the other's supporting arm.

"My God, that woman, that—" His voice was thick and low, but it was like a cry.

"Here, don't you mind about her," came the voice. "Water's what *you* need, and plenty of it. I know, old man, I been there myself."

Tim Gallagher half dragged and half carried him to the side of the house, dropped him and turned on a water spigot. Kit heard it, and felt desperately sick.

"There," came the voice of Gallagher, "you'll be feelin' better now. Here, take a drink of water. Wash your head in it."

Kit knelt beside the stream and ducked his head in it. The water made his headache articulate; he felt only intense normal pain now. He got up again, and found he could stand.

Tim led him to the milk wagon and put him on the seat, then sat down beside him, barely touching the reins that hung from the roof of the cart. The cart jogged on and on.

"See here, what's the—you mustn't—"

"I'll take ye to the car line," said Tim. "I'm late anyway—'twon't hurt."

At the end of a few blocks he stopped, and Kit got out. "Thank you," said Kit, reaching out his hand, "thanks awfully—"

"Wait; have you got any money?"

One of Kit's pockets was inside out already, and the other quite empty. "Here," said Tim, fishing into his overalls and producing a dime; "that'll take you to town. You'll be all right now, I guess. So long! Look out for that one last one—'tis that does it, every time!" He turned the wagon and clattered off, whistling.

II

Judas Iscariot is commonly supposed to have gone through some bad moments before he hanged himself. John Keats died considering himself a complete failure. Joan of Arc's last days were far from bright. Prometheus and Sisyphus, when last seen, were reported chronically unhappy. Presumably all these people suffered more than Kit on his trolley ride back

to town, but he would not have believed it, had he been told.

The general facts to be remembered (and they were, in a diffuse sort of way, quite horribly present to him at the time) are as follows:

1. He was a strong person, and hated weakness.
2. He was a virtuous person, and hated vice.
3. He was proud, and hated to be humiliated.
4. He was orderly, and hated disorderliness.

The more particular considerations are:

1. He was half dead from lack of sleep, he had a bursting head and joints that fairly screamed when he moved.

2. He had been drunk for thirty-six hours, brutally and bestially drunk, as he had never been before or dreamed of being.

3. He had disgraced himself
   a. As a Yale graduate.
   b. As a king.
   c. As himself.

4. He had fallen drunk and asleep on a woman's doorstep, and she had kicked him off it, as he deserved to be. Moreover she had lashed him with words, and some of the words she used were the very ones he himself had flung at the most disgusting creature he had ever beheld, Masson struggling with the two women.

5. A young milkman had picked him up when he had fallen to his lowest depth, doing all that could have been done; and that prompt spontaneous charity was the most sublime and the most awful thing he had ever known.

In short, the Secret Kingdom had fallen. There was no doubt of it this time; government, responsibility, control, honor, self-respect, all were lost. The

remains had been dumped into a trolley car by a milkman and given a dime to ride home with.

The remains dumped themselves out of the car at the Green and staggered to a room on the Campus. It was unbelievable that he could ever sleep again, but as soon as he saw his bed he flung himself on it, and as soon as he was on it he was asleep.

III

Five hours later he woke again, and after a cold shower his joints and his head felt better. He dressed meticulously in his blue serge, and went out to get breakfast at a cafeteria. He expected to see women and children shrink from him, and was surprised when they did not.

Coffee was a remarkable institution; after two cups of it he had an idea. He went to a certain club, sat down at a desk and wrote a letter which he addressed to Mr. Tim Gallagher, West Haven, Conn. In it, after some consideration, he enclosed a ten-dollar bill.

"I ask you to accept this, not as payment for what you did this morning, but as a reminder that Heaven rewards a good deed. You did the kindest thing that was ever done to me. If you are ever in need, I ask you to call on me."

He appended his name and address and sat staring at the letter. He sealed it finally, and sat staring at the envelope.

"It isn't enough," he said.

IV

He posted the letter in front of the door and walked aimlessly along the busy street. Girls in bright dresses

passed, students perspiringly propelling families, boot-black boys, costumed graduates, just plain people. The sound of brass bands was in the air; it was the day of the baseball game with Harvard.

(And it was curious how a sudden hot breath from the street brought back the smell of Nairava. The same warmth and dampness; he closed his eyes, half expecting the clatter of traffic to turn into the rustle of surf . . .)

But only the clatter went on; he had to open his eyes and face the raucous street once more. And the demanding years; they stretched ahead, like the street, ineluctable; but their end, like its, was out of sight. God, they must not pass thus again . . .

A thrill shook him: if somehow good should be the final goal of ill? If the milkman's divine mercy had given him back his life and another fair start? Worth it, worth even the worst, if only—

(And pain clutched at him as he thought how he had outraged even the most sacred thing; how when the class was drinking to Jack and the others he alone had spat out the liquor and flung away the glass . . .)

If only. But intentions were vapid. To dream and aspire was nothing; the time had come to Do. And what? What?

But it was horrible: he was as much in the air as ever. In this, his rebirth, he had no more mind, no more will— Terror shook him. If this . . .

Then all that, in a flash, was as though it had never been. With one convulsive movement he had stopped, turned, stooped and picked up a small object that lay glittering on the pavement. A ray of light came ninety-three million miles to strike that small object; thence it burned itself into Kit's eyes, into his brain and thence, from space and matter, into time, those

harsh interrogatory years that Kit must pass on earth. And the thing was only a safety pin, sprung from some indifferent woman's belt.

"Why," said Kit, staring at the thing in his hand, "why . . ."

Then, in the midst of vision, came the panic, and he closed his eyes and swayed into a fence. It was worse than ever before, ghastly, overwhelming—only, he knew, it would not overwhelm him if he stood firm. He had but to fight hard, stamp on certain thoughts —a villa at Cannes—and it would pass. It had always passed.

It passed; the years were answered. Kit shoved the pin into his pocket, smiled at the sky and stepped quickly forward up the hot street.

V

The new auxiliary and a steady west wind enabled him to catch the 4:37 out of New London. He arrived at Dimchurch soon after five, at the same hour that he and Mary had arrived last winter, but now the station was hot and sunny and full of dust. For some reason he decided not to try for a taxi, but, bag in hand, wandered through the station to the curb beyond, where the trolleys stopped.

The sidewalk was crowded with people, all walking in the same direction, and Kit automatically glanced toward the quarter from which they came. His view ended in a mass of cement and brick and colorless glass windows; the Works. He turned on the curb and faced inward, suddenly acutely alive to the mob of people, of all ages, sexes and nationalities, that went streaming by.

He saw an Italian of fifty, grizzled, paunchy, five

feet high, a tin box in one hand, the other gesticulating in accompaniment to a torrent of verbiage addressed to a companion exactly like himself. A woman with averted face, a shawl over her head, a figure of mystery. Four girls abreast, tired but bright-eyed: "Honestly, May, if you think any fella alive's gointa . . ." Then an unbroken platoon of men, some short, some tall, some thin, some fat, some younger, some older, but all dressed in nondescript, half-invisible dark clothes, all walking with their heads bent forward and their shoulders sagging, their eyes fixed as though in search, their feet in their heavy shoes moving up and down, up and down, like machines. A little girl clinging to the hand of a tall red-headed man; she walked without speaking, staring upward and outward at the assailing figures about her. Two clerks, in light gray suits, with straw hats, walking slowly; one had a gray mustache; the other, younger, had light blue eyes that caught Kit's for an instant; they were talking attentively together, full of importance. A red-cheeked, bull-necked boy of sixteen or so ran haltingly, picking his way through the crowd, grinning; he held a folded newspaper and brought it down with a slap on the head of another youth whose face appeared, flashing indignation, then greeting.

Many of them gathered on the curb to wait for a car, lounging about in groups. Kit saw one tall man in dark blue overalls offer another a newspaper; he heard the other, a black-haired man with a long upper lip, answering: "Naw, not now. I can't read the paper only when I'm home. In bed, with the light fixed right—push the old woman over to the wall—ha, that's the time to read . . ."

Another, a muscular, light-mustached man of forty,

pure Yankee, was regaling a crowd of friends with an anecdote: "Yeah, I was at the picture the other night, and say, it was kinda dark, you know, and I just pushed my way in and sat down without looking. Pretty soon the woman next to me says: 'What time is it, please?' I pulled out me watch and says 'Half past seven.' 'Huh,' she says, kinda short like. 'Huh, you're a great fella, you are,' she says. 'Why?' I says, and then I turns and looks at her, and damn me if it wasn't me wife's sister! She laughed like hell and says: 'You're a great fella, you are, to sit down next your own wife's sister and not even know her . . .'"

And they, together with a dim little-boy memory of loud whirling machines, formed all his knowledge of his new kingdom. But it was enough to send the blood racing through every last capillary of him, his mind palpitating with eagerness and wonder. "Oh, gosh!" he thought formlessly, as a car rumbled to a stop and he stepped forward. "Oh, gosh, *gosh!*"

VI

He had to go to New York, and was not able to reach the *Arsinoe* till Friday at lunch time. He had telegraphed ahead, and found the launch waiting for him near the station. The harbor smelt cool and fresh after the hot train.

Mary was sitting under the awning aft, and Vi, and two or three others. "You're pretty late," said Mary. "We've finished lunch, but Stokes has saved something for you. You'd better go right down."

"Yep," said Kit, "I'm hungry. Hello, people; see you later."

As he sat eating he saw Vi's head in the doorway.

"Kit, angel! What on *earth?*" She flopped gently into the room, fingering her pearls.

"Earth, heaven and hell!" said Kit, and laughed, with his mouth full. Was it possible that this child, this absurd, transparent creature, had ever meant anything to him either for danger or joy?

"Poor angel," breathed Vi, bending over. "And did they give you a nice lunchy-punchy?"

"Why, it's about as nice as most left-over lunchy-punchies are," allowed Kit. "Have a bit of cold lamb?"

Vi gave a slight shudder. "No, thanks. But shall I sit down, and talk to you while you eat it?"

"Why, yes, if you like," said Kit, as a schoolboy might have said it. He looked at her, and something must have gone with his look, for Vi all at once became stiff and straight, or as nearly so as her physique permitted. Her eyes glittered back at him for one moment, and her hands went up to her pearls again.

"Oh!" she said, on a high, staccato little note, utterly English, utterly Vi. Then she turned and went out.

So that was *that*.

Presently Mary came in to say that they were going ashore, as they had some things to do before the race, and she would send the launch back for him. "But see here," said Kit, "can't you stay? I've got to talk to you. Frightfully important."

"Not now, I'm afraid."

"But it's much more important than any race!"

She smiled. "I'm sorry, dear, but one can't ignore guests. Later."

She was off, but her smile was still with him. It was like . . . like the outside of the gates of paradise, beautiful and closed.

He joined her later on the observation train, and they saw the race together. He thought it was rather a flutter in a hencoop, but diverting in its way. They scrambled back to the *Arsinoe,* and the business of preparing for dinner began; afterward they were going to dance at the Griswold.

"But see here," said Kit, "I simply must talk to you. I can't sleep to-night till I've talked to you."

"After dinner," said Mary, rapidly winding her hair. "We can send them off, and join them later."

Kit looked at her as she stood before her glass in her peignoir, and all he could think of was an absurd line of poetry: "My mother bids me bind my hair and lace my bodice blue." Little she knew for what, poor child. Poor brave untroubled Mary.

VII

They sat alone at last, facing each other over the saloon table. The place was bright with chintz and shaded lights; Kit had chosen it because it was more businesslike than the deck with its vistas of dreamy water. Mary smoked a cigarette, holding it aloft, her elbow propped on her other hand, regarding her husband with a calm, slightly austere receptivity, like a business man. Kit stared at her.

"Well, dear," said Mary.

Kit smiled in pain. "You're so good and kind. That makes it harder—and it's so hard, anyway."

"Yes. It generally is."

"Well," he began, pulling himself together, "I can best describe what has happened as a sort of *coup d'état* in the Secret Kingdom. I've never told you about that—it seemed absurd; but I've always thought of a person's self as a sort of kingdom. . . . The

old government of mine was rotten, and it fell. A new one's taken its place, and I have hopes that it'll do better . . .

"I suppose you've known," he went on, knitting his brows, "that I've been in a pretty bad way lately?" She nodded. "It's been worse, I think, than even I realized. It was a sort of death in life—no, damnation in life. To see yourself grow to like the things you hate, and hate the things you like, and not be able to lift a finger to stop yourself. . . . All that came to a head in New Haven."

He sketched briefly the events of the thirty-six hours. Then he came to the matter of the safety pin, but after a moment's hesitation decided that it sounded too fanciful and merely said that he had decided to take over Uncle Jeff's factory.

"I got to Dimchurch Tuesday, and we talked most of that night and the next day. Then Wednesday evening I went to New York, to see what was possible, in exact terms. I think I see my way pretty well now. I take over all Uncle Jeff's stock—he wanted to keep hold of it till it began to go up, but that wouldn't do. I must be all in it if I'm in it at all. So I'm taking over the whole of it, at 54."

"And the presidency, I suppose?"

"Nothing of the kind. I'm going to put on a pair of overalls next Monday morning and begin unloading brass plates from freight cars. I think that's about the most menial work there is, bar sweeping floors. And it'll be that sort of thing, in one department after another, for two years. Uncle Jeff says one, but I think more. And then, when I know each job, and the *state of mind* of each job, something executive.

"Well, that's all easy; now comes the difficult part to explain. In the first place, the transfer is to be

kept secret. I'm using a dummy buyer. Do you see? —I couldn't stand that, having foremen know that I was masquerading under them. The young prince in disguise—all that. My apprenticeship must be as honest as I can make it.

"To make you see the whole thing I'll have to go a good deal deeper into my character than is interesting; however! I won't say that I'm unusual, but I privately think I am. Every one does. Well, my unusualness, if it exists, lies in . . . in reaching happiness chiefly through a feeling of usefulness and importance to other people. Even if it means sacrifice of safety and comfort—in fact, mostly *through* the sacrifice of those things.

"Several times in my life I've had a choice to make between comfort and responsibility. Once was in Nairava, when it was a question of killing that sailor for the sake of peace. I did it, though I knew it might mean court-martial and all sorts of unpleasantness, let alone moral scruples. The court-martial never came—I think chiefly because I told them in Washington exactly how it was, and left it to them to proceed if they liked. As for the moral scruples, they haven't bothered much . . . Why, it would have been immoral, standing as I did, to let him live.

"Another time was about Jack. Another time was way back in the Blues, when I'd been made a corporal, and told a runty little kid to put his gun away.

"The last time was last Tuesday morning . . .

"It's extraordinary about Dimchurch. It's always been a possibility, ever since I was a mere kid. I never liked the idea, because it was commercial, and mere commercialism never attracted me. It doesn't now. But then neither does the idea of being the Industrial Savior of the country. You mustn't make

any mistake about that. I have no convictions about the Dignity of Labor. I'm not posing as the Workman's Friend. I haven't found the key to industrial peace. If I'm half as successful in maintaining it as Uncle Jeff has been I'll be lucky. It might be said, I suppose, that the really great figures of to-day—the modern kings—are the kings of industry. Certainly the idea of power over the labor and payment of 1500 people, over their whole economic life—is the sort of thing that would attract a man with the bug of responsibility. But—I want you to get this straight—I'm going into the thing for purely selfish reasons, to save myself. I see a chance to buy the sort of responsibility that makes me happy, and I'm buying it. My money's never brought me anything worth while since I had it; well, it's going to now. It's going to buy me a job, a job that'll make Nairava look like child's play.—I suppose this sounds like the most awful cheek?"

"No," said Mary, lighting another cigarette; "not entirely."

Kit placed his two hands palms down on the table and stammered. "Now then, this—this is the hard part. The money. I said I was using my money to buy salvation. That's the rub; it'll take most of it. The plant's a bigger thing than I knew; Uncle Jeff must have been a pretty rich man back in the good time. Well, the point is, buying fifty-two per cent of the stock, even at its present price, will take the greater part of what I have. And what I have, of course, is yours as well."

Mary parted her lips and he thought she was going to speak; but she only looked quietly at him through the blue cigarette smoke.

"What I've done is this," he went on, with some

difficulty. "I've put aside the safest investments. Half of them are bonds, and the stocks are public utilities and things that won't fluctuate much. They bring in, all told, an income of something like twelve thousand a year. Later on, when things recover, they'll bring more, but not much. Probably not more than fifteen thousand, at the best. Well, these securities I'm planning to settle on you, absolutely, without condition.

"I'm not pretending, Mary, that it's much. I know it's a pretty poor fulfillment of our marriage contract. It's—I . . . it's hard to say anything without implying that you married me for money, which of course you didn't; but our marriage gives you certain rights in my money. Your happiness and—and salvation lie in things that a big income gives, as mine lies in other things. On what I propose leaving you, you can't have all those things. You can have safety and a certain amount of ease; a flat in New York and a trip abroad now and then and perhaps a car and chauffeur, but that's about all. And, Mary, if it isn't enough, I want you to say so. Truthfully, because I've no right to buy my salvation at the expense of yours. I won't say I'll give up my whole plan if you object, but I'll reconsider it, and perhaps modify it. At any rate I shan't consider it settled without knowing how you feel."

He stopped. The softly bright little room was dead quiet; the new chintzes gave forth a light pleasant odor; a faint fragmentary whistling drifted in from the crew's quarters. Mary looked at the end of her cigarette, flicked the ash off it and then suddenly pounded it out on a small brass tray. She leaned forward in her chair toward Kit, her arms resting on the table.

"Then—you don't want me?" she said.

VIII

The words were like a two-edged knife in a finely woven texture, the texture of Kit's talk and all that lay behind it. The whole prayerfully devised pattern lay in shreds between them.

"Why," he said, and felt his heart give a curious flutter, "why, I haven't considered that, Mary. I've been taking a pretty selfish point of view all along, but that's really one thing I haven't allowed myself to think about."

"What?" Her question was blind, dumb, like a stupid child's.

"Why, whether I want you to—to share this exile with me. I thought your freedom was the best I could offer you—and the least."

She flicked her hand impatiently. "Don't go on like that."

"Like what?"

"In that . . . impersonal way."

He stifled a laugh, not having been aware of impersonality, exactly. But Mary was deadly serious.

"Don't tell me," she went on, and deep feeling suddenly vibrated in her voice, "that when you've found yourself at last—come to see the world from your right point of view—I've got no place in it?"

"Place?" he stammered. "Why, you'll always have a place—"

"You don't suppose," Mary broke in, "that I haven't known you weren't yourself, all this year? Ever since before we were married? It's been plain as a pikestaff. It was as if you were in a trance. It

was for what you'd be when you came out of it—and to help you out, if possible—that I married you."

"That was dear of you," said Kit fatuously. He was alive now with hope and excitement, but Mary had the lead and was talking on, with ever-growing fire.

"Of course I haven't been able to lift a finger to help you out. Perhaps that gives you some right to shove me aside, but not all—oh, not all, when I've watched for it and wanted it so! And now that it's come, you don't think I don't appreciate it, do you? Why, it's superb. Giving all you're giving up, just for a conviction—it's the most magnificent thing I ever saw. And in spite of all this, not to be with you, not to mean one confounded thing—"

"Mary!" he cut in sharply. "Do you mean you want to go to Dimchurch with me?"

She looked at him as one would look at a perfect fool, and spoke as if at the height of an argument. "But of course I want to go to Dimchurch with you! Kamchatka, if you like!"

"Really?" he pursued in wonder. "Give up New York? Restaurants? Music?"

"Why, yes!"

"This—society thing?"

"Why, of course. That's nothing but a game. As soon as I found I could play it I began to lose interest in it."

"And you're interested in *me?*"

"Well, I believe so!"

"Ah, but you aren't sure," he said, sinking back in his chair, remembering something. This was just a generous impulse on her part, beautiful but transient; he must not take advantage of it.

"What do you mean?" Mary followed him up.

"Can't I be interested in anything but cafés and Schumann if I want to? Is it so absurd to be interested in one's own husband?"

"Why, no. The point is, I killed all that in you. How could it have been otherwise, the way I carried on? That was why you took it that way, when Vi came into it."

"Vi? Did she come into it, after all?"

"I mean, when I did that funny thing, and asked you to get her away. You were dear about it, perfectly fine, but—"

"Oh, God!" said Mary, thumping the table. "I see! I see it now. You were worried because I wasn't jealous of Vi! Was that it?"

"Well—"

"Jealous!" cried Mary, her eyes flashing with a kind of angry amusement. "Jealous! As if I didn't hope and pray that Vi would get you, from the very start! As though—oh, I don't know. I couldn't help but hate her, of course, and hate the idea; and yet I knew that if she once dragged you down it would do the trick. It couldn't have failed—with you."

"What trick?"

"Why, give you a big jolt, shake you out of the trance. What you needed, you, so careful and orderly and refined every minute, was one large, wholesome humiliation. I thought Vi would give it to you—not consciously, oh no, but that you'd wake up and see afterward. I'd lose you for a while, yes, but I knew there'd be something different, and better, in your place."

"Well, of all the—"

"It didn't even need that, it seems—a simple drunken orgy was enough. I'd thought of that, too. Often and often this winter, when a man's been car-

ried feet first out of a dance, I've thought, 'Oh, if that could only happen to Kit Newell, just once—!' "

"But why should you hope for such a thing? It might have meant—"

"It never could have meant but one thing, with you. What do you think you are, a kind of Nero? Ha! A man that keeps a bottle of indelible ink in his top bureau drawer, to mark his collars with the minute he buys them, and marks them, too—he isn't the kind of man that's likely to go very far on the Primrose Path."

"Well, I'll be darned!" said Kit, his jaw dropping.

"Vi!" went on Mary angrily. "Why, I fairly jumped with joy when you said you might be in love with her. Your telling me like that—everything in first-rate order. Look here: do you suppose you'd have *breathed* such a thing to me, if you'd really loved her? Pooh! How can a man be such a fool about himself?"

There was something about her indignation that struck him as supremely funny; there was really so little to be indignant about now. He threw his head back in one burst of laughter that pricked her anger like a bubble; then he got up, drew her by her hands out of her chair and kissed her soundly on the mouth. "There!" he said, patting her shoulders approvingly. "You're the most wonderful woman God ever made."

"I'm not," said Mary, for some reason holding on to her indignation. "Just a little plain horse sense, a little—"

"Ah, of course you talk nonsense. But for the grace of God I might have gone straight to the devil under your treatment . . . Well, perhaps not. Anyway, God was gracious, so we'll call you right.—You haven't kissed me."

"I don't want to—"

"You—"

"—because I like to think about doing it. If you knew how long I've . . . There. Oh, Lord, my hair. My, you did give me a turn! Of all the stupid, selfish, stuck-up—sweetheart! I was just afraid you didn't like me any more."

"Well, I do. Is that clear?"

She stood facing him, her shoulders limp in his hands, her head thrown back a little, smiling deliciously. "Is this real?" she breathed. "Does it come this way, so—so normally? I didn't think—"

"Don't think!"

"No. Only, can it last?"

"It'll last," said Kit, "like indelible ink;" and they giggled helplessly.

"Oh," said Mary, looking up, "I want a house on a select residential street, with two cement things leading to the garage behind. And a front parlor, too small for the grand piano, so that the neighbors'll say we're living above our station. And the works of Schumann, five volumes, on top of it. I'll play in the evening, and you'll be *so* bored, and go to sleep, and pretend you haven't. Then in summer we'll go out for a ride in the Ford—can we go a Ford?"

"I think so."

"And a maid? Just one?"

"Why, yes. After all, your fortune—"

"What?"

"Our fortune—will be twelve thousand a year. One doesn't exactly starve on that, you know."

"Doesn't one?" said Mary, looking at him. "Are you sure? I've starved on twelve hundred, which was what Father allowed me, and I've starved on eighty thousand. I think I've starved every minute of my life, till now."

IX

"It's late," said Kit, "nearly eleven. Hadn't we better join those people?"

"I suppose so," said Mary. "Do we have to go? What a bore!"

"Look here, let's pretend it's a game, one last game. Let's pretend we're a rich lady and gentleman entertaining a party of fashionable friends—Viscountesses and such—on our yacht. And they've gone ashore to dance. And we'll go over in a launch and dance with them for a while, and then bring them back and sit around eating sandwiches in a chintz saloon till all hours, talking like rich, fashionable people. It'll be so nice afterward, when we find it isn't true!"

"All right," said Mary, responding. "Let's be very bored and calm and witty, like people on the stage, all gardenias and spats—only it isn't the time of day for spats, is it? So cynical and worldly—oh, couldn't we have some one almost compromised? Yachts are splendid for that!"

The words brought something back to Kit. He looked around the bright little room and sighed. "Poor old yacht. My mother used to be so sick on her. She always thought she'd get over it, but she never did."

"Dear yacht," said Mary softly, following his thought. "I suppose she'll have to go?"

"We certainly couldn't run her, and I doubt if we could even keep her. Better sell her, if we can get a good price."

"Yes. We'll get another some time, when you've made your Works pay again. Only . . . the old days, somehow. Your mother and father, and their friends—it was nice, wasn't it? Plenty of money,

but no hurry, no jazz, no cheapness. Will days like that ever come back, do you think?"

"I don't think I can bring them, at least not tonight. But some things are pretty nice as they are, seems to me. Come on, dear, the launch is waiting."

They went up into the dark, and descended a small flight of steps leading obscurely into a bobbing boat. A man half rose from his seat, touched his cap and bent over the engine, and they sat down in the forward cockpit. The launch cast off, the yacht moved slowly away, the yellow lights flowing from her ports and skylights. Kit and Mary watched her, their hands joined in the darkness.

The launch gave a sneeze and plunged forward and about, humming comfortably. The harbor yawned in front, broken by the dim forms of anchored boats, slim and shipshape, black or white, teetering with the waves or vastly immovable. Lights swung from their mastheads and glittered from their hulls. Afar on shore gleamed a chain of whiter points; from behind these, fugitively, at the will of the breeze, came a soft mooing of brass horns. A ship's bell clanged.

The water, black and choppy, was riddled with moving high lights. Occasional launches darted about, chugging feverishly and blowing sirens; waves divided from their sterns, deflecting channels of light that swept smoothly out at an expanding angle. Soon they broke, scattered, coalesced with other lights, subsided. The expanse was a welter of struggle between living light and dead darkness; to look at it was like looking at chaos. Mary and Kit sat blinking and speechless before it, but their craft, guided by the unseen man at the wheel, plunged steadily through it and carried them safely to the landing.

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